

# **Implementation of skills development programmes in the education training and development sector**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research study investigated implementation of the skills development programmes in the education, training and development sector using the ETDPSETA as a case study. Our investigation focused on implementation of the youth development programme outlined in the ETDPSETA five-year strategic plan for fiscal years 2011/12 to 2015/16. We chose this programme as our focus because it consumes more than sixty per cent of discretionary grant funding of the SETA. Through in-depth one on one and group interviews, we sought to understand what the programme was intended to achieve, what was delivered in reality, were there gaps between programme planning and actual implementation, and what were the challenges experienced by implementers in their implementation of this programme. To triangulate our findings from the interviews, we conducted an in-depth document analysis looking at various planning documents, implementation and reporting evidence. We further used the Programme theory model, the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF) and the Ecological Framework for understanding implementation to interpret and discuss our research findings. We found that there were major gaps in the manner the ETDPSETA implements its youth development programme, which could negatively affect realisation of programme outcomes and impacts. This is in spite of the fact that the ETDPSETA consistently met its programme implementation targets.

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Sibongile Nhlabathi

Johannesburg, 19 August, 2016

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis/dissertation titled 'Implementation of skills development programmes in the education training and development sector' is my own, unaided work. I have acknowledged and referenced all sources that I have used and quoted. I hereby submit it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (Public sector monitoring and evaluation) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have not submitted this report before for any other degree or examination to any other institution.

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Johannesburg, 19 August, 2016

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## **1. Introduction to the research**

### **1.1 Background**

#### **1.1.1 History of skills development in South Africa**

According to McGrath and Badroondien (2006), the history of skills development in South Africa (S.A.) dates as far back as before 1989 since the beginning of the industrialisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and was highly shaped and influenced by international factors through importation of mainly high level skills. Until 1970, immigration of skilled whites mainly from European countries remained the biggest source of SA skills requirements (McGrath and Badroondien, 2006).

Skills development in the country continued to evolve in the 70s through pressure brought about by the 1976 Soweto uprisings, the Riekert and De Lange Reports, and three (3) joints investigations conducted by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the National Training Board (NTB) (McGrath and Badroodien, 2006).

In the 1980s, pressure mounted from various quarters including the African National Congress (ANC), Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) later joint by National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) through discussions and negotiations that brought about the National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) (McGrath and Badroodien, 2006).

After 1994, all of the above developments and negotiations gave rise to the establishment of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which later brought to fruition the promulgation of the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA) of 1999. The promulgation of the aforementioned two key skills development legislation created institutional arrangements and frameworks to facilitate implementation skills development in the country and put mechanisms in place for funding of skills development initiatives driven by government. The SDA in particular brought about the establishment of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) (McGrath and Badroodien, 2006).



To support the implementation of the aforementioned key pieces of legislation, the Human Resources Development Strategy of South Africa (HRDS-SA) and the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) 1,11 and 111 were developed in order to set performance measures to assess progress made by these SETAs (Allais, 2012).

It is against the aforementioned backdrop that the Education Training and development Practices Sector Education Training Authority (ETDPSETA) including other SETAs across the twenty-three S.A. economic sectors were established. The SETAs are stakeholder driven institutions governed by Boards that are comprised of sector employers and trade union representatives. Their mandate is to facilitate implementation of skills development within their respective economic sectors and they all account to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (Allais, 2012).

Hereunder we present our case study - the ETDPSETA, with a mandate to facilitate implementation of skills development in the education, training and development (ETD) sector.

### **1.1.2 The Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority**

The ETDPSETA is one of the twenty-one (21) previously twenty-three (23) SETAs that were established through the enactment of the SDA and the SDLA. One of its key mandates as prescribed in the SDA is to develop a five-year Sector Skills Plan (SSP) in consultation with employers and other key role players in the ETD sector. The SSP developed in line with other key national policies such as the NSDS, HRDS-SA, Industrial Planning and Action Policy (IPAP) and the National Development Plan (NDP). Based on the SSP approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, the SETA must then develop a three to five years strategic plan in line with the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). Subsequent to the approval of the strategic plan by DHET, the SETA also has to develop an annual performance plan (APP) clearly articulating various skills development programmes to be implemented for both workers in the sector, unemployed youth and students in various institutions of higher learning. These programmes are in the form of learning programmes described by the SDA as

learnerships, apprenticeships, internships and skills programme all or most of which must include structured work experience placement (Kraak et al, 2013).

The ETDPSETA has its Head Office based in Johannesburg – Bedford view, and has nine (9) provincial offices that are in Braamfontein - Gauteng, Potchefstroom – North West, Kimberly – Northern Cape, Belville – Western Cape, East London – Eastern Cape, Bloemfontein – Free State, Durban – KwaZulu Natal, Nelspruit - Mpumalanga and Polokwane - Limpopo. These offices were mainly created to enable the SETA to be easily accessible and in close proximity with the beneficiaries of its programmes as well as sector employers in the respective provinces. More importantly, they serve as a vehicle for ETDPSETA' programme implementation, support and monitoring (ETDPSETA annual report, 2014).

According to its SSP 2010 - 2016, the ETDP SETA facilitate implementation of a number of key skills development programmes in partnership with various stakeholders including higher education institutions (HEIs), Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, National and Provincial Departments of Education and others including organized labour in the sector.

A fifteen-member board governs the ETDP SETA. The members are representative of employers and trade unions in the sector, nominated by their respective constituencies and recommended to Minister of Higher Education and Training for approval and appointment.

In fulfilling its fiduciary responsibility, the board has established various advisory sub-committees such as the audit committee, risk committee, remuneration committee, human resource committee and the chambers that are to advise the Board and ETDPSETA management on priority needs, areas of concern and programmes implementation in the ETD sector. These chambers are five and are; Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)/Early Childhood Development (ECD), Further Education and Training (FET)/TVET, Higher Education and Research, Schooling, and ETD Quality provisioning Chambers (ETDPSETA annual report, 2014).

## **1.2 Implementation of skills development in ETD sector**

### **1.2.1 Research problem statement**

As already alluded in the previous section, the SDA mandates the ETDPSETA to facilitate and promote implementation of skills development in the ETD sector. According to recent performance reviews of SETAs, including the ETDPSETA there is indications that they are failing to implement their mandate as articulated in the SDA. These reports raise serious concerns on a number of key performance areas of SETAs. The concerns include but not limited to surplus funds that have escalated to over R3 billion, large sums of money that have been spent on programmes without evidence of impact in respect to improving skills sets of the participants, as there is indication that a large proportion of beneficiaries remain under skilled and unemployed. The concerns continue to suggest that SETAs as skills development institutional structures meant for facilitating and implementation of skills development are not functioning well as expected by their various stakeholders and it appears that there is little impact in improving the skills profile in their respective sectors including the ETD sector (Kraak et al, 2013).

Furthermore, it also appears that various stakeholders do not support a large proportion of skills development programmes implemented by the SETAs. Reports further suggests that information used by SETAs for planning, implementation and reporting purpose is not consistent and valid to also enable the DHET to report adequately on their performance, which is a huge hindrance to transparency and accountability (Kraak et al, 2013).

As public entities, the ETDPSETA and other SETAs are required to submit APPs at the beginning of each financial year, and an annual performance reports at the end of each financial year. Analysis of the ETDPSETAs annual report shows that while the ETDPSETA has achieved most of its numerical targets, there are however worrying observations made by the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA) in the SETA' audited 2013/14 financial statements as follows:

*“The accounting authority did not implement the proper internal control and/or review measures in place to ensure that information reported is valid, accurate and complete with regard to the commitments” (ETDPSETA annual report, 2014, pps.107-108).*

The AGSA continues to make statements as follows:

*“The entity did not have a proper system of records management that provides for the maintenance of information that supports the disclosure of commitments in the annual financial statements” and “Management did not monitor controls over quarterly recording and reconciling of transactions to ensure that complete and accurate recording of actual achievements of targets is achieved” (ETDPSETA annual report, 2014, pps.107-108).*

The above statements are of course worrying to anyone and to a larger extent confirm some of the assertions made by Kraal et al. (2013) in the opening statements made earlier above.

It is therefore our proposition that all of the above problems may be attributable to a number of factors that are related to inadequate and weak organisational systems for programme planning and implementation, which impacts negatively in the achievement of skills development outcomes and thus not making any impact in the ETD sector.

### **1.2.2 Research purpose statement**

With the aforementioned problem statement as a backdrop, the purpose of this research study was to assess how the ETDP SETA facilitates and promotes implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector, with a specific focus on its youth development programme. According to Saunders, Evans and Joshi (2005), this type of exercise seeks to open the so-called ‘black box’ in order to understand what happened during the implementation that could have an impact on the programme outcomes or impacts. The study investigated the ETDPSETA’ planning and implementation processes of their youth development programme in seven of the nine provinces. The study assessed the plans against what delivery in reality, gaps between plans and delivery, and what were the causes of these. We premised our study on two assertions made by Durlak and DuPre (2008):

- (i) That designing an effective intervention or programme is only just a first step towards improving the lives and well-being of the beneficiaries; and
- (ii) That making a difference in the beneficiaries' lives is a more complex and a long-term process that requires intense interrogation of successive complex phases of programme implementation.

It is against this backdrop that we were interested in investigating implementation of skills development in the ETD sector.

The study followed specific processes in conducting this assessment such as using a programme logic model to understand the philosophy or theory underpinning the ETDPSSETA' youth development programme. The study also utilised other appropriate explanatory frameworks to interrogate ETDPSSETAs implementation strategies and processes. In that, we examined various aspects of implementation in order to determine how they positively or negatively contribute towards quality implementation and thus achievement of programme outcomes. In the process of doing that, the research study also attempted to identify possible challenges that programme implementers experience in the course of implementation and proposes critical success factors to be in place to promote quality implementation.

We did all of the above through an intensive review of relevant literature on the broad field of study, and conducting both one-on-one and group interviews. Of course, appropriate instruments were developed and used to collect and analyse data. Finally, based on analysis of data, we presented findings and recommendations later in this research report.

### **1.2.3 Research questions**

In response to the research problem stated earlier above, this research study provides answers to the following research questions:

- How is the ETDPSSETA implementing skills development programme in the ETD sector?

- What are the challenges experienced by the programme implementers in their implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector?

### **1.3 Delimitations of the research**

The broad field of this study is monitoring and evaluation, comprised of two components namely monitoring, and evaluation. This research study however, focused on the evaluation component. Evaluation in itself has further sub components that entail formative evaluation, process evaluation, outcomes evaluation and impacts evaluation. For purposes of this study, we focused our efforts on the implementation evaluation/process evaluation.

### **1.4 Justification of the research**

The research study sought to understand varying aspects of implementation, and identify barriers to quality programme implementation in order to put corrective measures in place where necessary based on findings and recommendations.

The financial 2016/17 years are the last phase of the implementation of the ETDPSETA five-year strategic plan. At the end of this period, the SETA will conduct outcomes and impact evaluations of programmes. As highlighted in Durlak and DuPre (2008) that programme impact evaluations that are conducted without sufficient information on implementation, do not do justice in measuring impact. Durlak and DuPre further suggest that collection of implementation data is very critical for making appropriate determinations on programme impacts. This according to Harachi et al. (1999) opens up the 'Black Box', which avoids what is referred to as Type III error. Harachi et al suggest that it is important that evaluation practice should begin to differentiate between implementation failures and programme failures in its determination of impacts. This statement serves as an important justification for this study, which is to gather enough implementation data in order to prepare for these forth-coming impact evaluations.

### **1.5 Preface to the research report**

This report is comprised of six chapters; following this introductory chapter is Chapter 2, which provides a summary of the literature review conducted covering a further articulation of the problem, past and current studies conducted by other researchers in an attempt to understand similar problems. The report further presents a number of explanatory frameworks used in these past studies and later presents a conceptual framework that we used for this research study. Chapter 3 discusses the research techniques, procedures and methods. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively present and discuss the research findings in response to the research questions while Chapter 6 summarises, concludes, presents recommendations of possible corrective measures and future research.

## **2. Literature review**

This chapter presents literature we extensively reviewed. It begins with providing a brief description of the unit of analysis, which is our case study (ETDPSETA) in section 2.1. It proceeds to section 2.2 to provide an overview of literature on implementation of skills development in South Africa and other countries. In section 2.3, we continue to review literature on methods, data and conclusions drawn by other researchers who have also attempted to respond to features underlying implementation of skills development programmes or other programmes. In that, we attempted to highlight some limitations in their approaches, which assisted us to review our research questions and research design. Section 2.4 and 2.5 introduce key concepts in monitoring and evaluation as a broad field of study, and present key attributes of the study. While section 2.6 presents a summary of theories relevant to this study, section 2.7 describes and presents a conceptual framework used to guide the research process including the explanatory framework/s used in interpreting the findings.

### **2.1 The history and description of the Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority**

Ushering in the new democracy, the new ANC led government in its attempt to deal with the dearth of appropriate skills to drive economic growth in the country, promulgated the Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998 as amended in 2008 (SDA); which set up institutional arrangements and structures for skills development in South Africa (McGrath and Akoojee, 2007).

The ETDPSETA's mandate as outlined in the SDA is to develop and implement its Sector Skills Plans through designing relevant learning programmes, approving workplace skills plans (WSPs) and allocating appropriate grants for various learning programmes referred to in the Act as learnerships, internships and skills programmes. This assumes that the process is technical and guided in nature, while in reality it is more a stakeholder driven process. ETD employers in consultations with unions are responsible for developing WSPs, and submit to the ETDPSETA for approval and payment. These serve as data collection instruments informing the identification of skills shortages within each



workplace, which ultimately informs the scarce and critical skills reflected in the SETA SSP.

ETDPSETA Annual Reports show that many of the employers in the sector do not submit these plans, for those who do, do it in a haphazard manner as they consider it just as a process of claiming grants. This of course compromises the quality of sector skill planning processes.

According McGrath and Akoojee (2007), SETAs were set up in response to an identified need to advance the workers' skills development agenda post-apartheid and thus they represented a vehicle for addressing the skills deficit and growth imperatives in the country. They were set up with a responsibility of identifying and locating skills development needs within their respective sectors within the context of the national skills development imperatives. This is highly unlikely as indicated in the previous paragraph that one of the processes of doing that, which is workplace skills planning, is fraught with gaps. This has led to poor planning informed by incorrect information.

According to Allais, (2012), the dearth of skills is not a new phenomenon to South Africa's new democracy. Prior 1994, in response to then similar economic difficulties, the apartheid regime in its attempt to transform the skills, introduced institutional structures referred to as Industry Training Boards (ITBs) who were established in all industries to administer the apprenticeship system and certificate training related. Consequently, the new government used the ITBs model to establish SETAs and this seemed flawed as it perpetuated the old way of doing things however with changed mandates and objectives (Allais, 2012).

SETAs are stakeholder driven/run entities comprised of employers and trade unions in their respective sectors that form SETA Boards. The Board members are appointed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for a period of five years, which is an assumed period of SETA's establishment. Some employers believe that these board members drive the ministerial national agenda rather than the sector agenda, and have thus viewed them with suspicion (McGrath and Akoojee, 2012). In further compounding the problem, constituencies nominate these members sometimes not based on technical expertise, and this tends to influence the quality of debates and decisions taken at board

negatively. There may also be issues of conflict of interests as some sectors such as the ETD are wide and very much diverse in nature, which makes it impossible to respond adequately to all its needs and priorities.

The ETDPSETA' Constitution as approved by the Minister, prescribes the roles and responsibilities of the Board, which entail fiduciary duties such as setting up board committees with various mandates but to essentially advise the board on specific areas of their operation in order to improve accountability. Constituencies are responsible for nominating board committees members, and some are not necessarily equipped to interrogate the technical issues at hand and some as earlier indicated come with conflicted interests.

The board also has a responsibility of appointing senior management of the ETDPSETA including recommending the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer to the Minister of Higher Education and Training (ETDPSTA annual report, 2013/14). Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of these appointments in many instances not necessarily based on the incumbents' technical skills and expertise, which has a tendency of compromising quality of the day-to-day running of the SETAs.

SETAs including the ETDPSETA receive their funding through the Skills Development Levies Act No.9 of 1999 as amended in 2010, which prescribes that employers in the sector pay one per cent of their payroll costs to South African Revenue Services (SARS), and eighty per cent of it goes to the SETAs. A twenty per cent of the eighty percentage goes to employers on their submission of workplace training plans and reports (WSPRs). Ten per cent of it funds the day-to-day administrative costs of running SETAs and the rest of the fifty per cent funds various skills development programmes implemented by the SETAs (Skills Development Levies Act No.9 of 1999 as amended in 2010). As already mentioned earlier, the ETD sector is wide and diverse with employers that are largely small and micro enterprises with little means to contribute meaningfully to the financial resources of the SETA. This poses a challenge for the ETDPSETA to spread its limited resources to address the needs of all employers in the sector.

According to its 2015/16 annual performance plan, its annual expenditure estimates range from approximately 338 937 millions in 2011/12 financial year to about 472 146 millions in 2015/16 financial year expressed in table 1 hereunder. Though indications from the table below show a growing trajectory of resources, which may suggest that the sector is growing and therefore more employers to service, it could also mean that employers are starting to comply with the levies Act as result of stringent measures by the South African Revenue Services (SARS). Whether the sector is growing or there is more compliance, either way, this poses additional burden on the ETDPSETA as the demands and expectations are more than what the SETA could provide for.

Table 1 below: ETDPSETA Expenditure estimates.

Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6	Column7	Column8	Column9
Programme	Audited outcomes			Adjusted appr Medium-term expenditure estimate				
R Thousand	Nov-10	Dec-11	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
1 Administratio	76 752	86 606	101 913	134 372	121 244	127 304	133 670	
Non project admin costs					106 644	113 504	105 810	
Programme 8					14 600	13 800	27 860	
2 QCTO				1 843	936 2 009	2 089		
3 Mandatory Gr	108 223	122 541	138 741	55 290	59 581	60 284	62 695	
4 Discretionary	117 688	129 790	100 816	408 357	290 385	R 276 496	R 286 430	
Previously Committed				99 711				
Programme 1			2 860	3 579	3 400	R 3 650	R1 450	
Programme 2			7 429	31 950	64 159	R 61 740	R 61 292	
Programme 3			9 633	56 700	36 730	R 38 500	R 39 600	
Programme 4			27 817	73 925	56 330	R 38 385	R 42 800	
Programme 5			46 628	94 100	99 688	R 106 825	R 112 962	
Programme 6			3 752	40 900	21 500	R 19 850	R 20 750	
Programme 7			2 697	7 992	8 577	R 7 545	R 7 576	
TOTAL	302 663	338 937	341 470	599 862	472 146	466 093	484 884	

Source: ETDPSETA 2014/15 annual performance plan, p.4

While the SETAs are to service employers in their sectors with employees' workplace training, there is also growing need for them to service the post schooling needs of the country wherein there is huge numbers of young people not in employment, education and training (NEET).

The ETDPSETA has a staff compliment of about hundred and four employees based in both its head office in Johannesburg and nine provincial offices that ensure implementation of skills development programmes (ETDPSTA annual report, 2014).

The ETDPSETA has a myriad of sub sectors and constituent employers, all of which are different with varying challenges and skills development needs. "The thirteen (13) constituencies of the ETDP SETA are ECD centres, private and public schools, school governing bodies' employers, public and private FETs, public and HEIs, ABET centres, non-government organisations (NGOs), Research organisations, Library and Information

and Archival Services, Trade Unions as Employers and Political Parties as Employers. Some SETAs and professional bodies are also paying levies to the ETDP SETA and form another constituency that requires further investigation” (ETDP SETA SSP update for 2015-16, pg. 15). The diversity of the sectors poses even a bigger challenge for the SETA to balance the services it delivers to all. Obviously, there are those organizations with little voices that are compromised in the process of allocation of programmes and funding thereof. In its planning and implementation, the ETDP SETA has to make sure that it services all sub-sectors within its limited resources.

## **2.2 An overview of skills development in South Africa and the ETD sector**

### **2.2.1 Skills Development agenda in South Africa**

There is general consensus in global and local literature that improving the country’ national skill set is an important policy imperative for any country, faced with high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequalities. In their assessment of Singapore’ Skills Development System, Kuruvilla, Erickson and Hwang, (2001) concur to this fact by pointing out to volumes of available literature that confirm a strong relationship between investments in human capital and economic growth. This argument is supported by Kruss et al (2012) who postulate that the organisations’ competitive edge emanates from its capability to absorb, adapt and build on new technologies which are mostly reliant on country’ education, training and skills development systems. Kuruvilla, Erickson and Hwang mention successful developing countries such as Korea, Singapore and Malaysia who have fore grounded and prioritized various strategies for education, skills and capability development. According to Kuruvilla, Erickson and Hwang, (2001) Singapore is the best-known example of a nation that has successfully and continuously up skilled its workforce over the last 40 years. The system is one of the oldest systems in comparison to other developing countries including South Africa and has largely contributed to Singapore’ top ranking in many international comparative surveys on human resources development (Kuruvilla, Erickson and Hwang, 2001).

In South Africa, the major concerns have to do with absence of skills development for workers, the difficulty of young people and the unemployed to enter the labour market and the lack of mobility in between the world of learning and work. In an attempt to

respond appropriately, the South Africa government promulgated the SDA, which created enabling institutional and regulatory framework for expanding strategic investment in education and training across economic sectors. The key policy imperatives for the promulgation of the SDA are to develop skills of the workers in South Africa, increase levels of investment in education and training, encourage employers to participate actively in skilling workers, new labour entrants and individuals that are struggling to find jobs enter into the labour market system. More importantly, the SDA intends to turn workplaces into centres of learning in various ways while ensuring quality of education (Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998 as amended in 2008). The youth development programme of the ETDPSETA is a direct response to this policy imperative.

Furthermore, McGrath and Akoojee, (2007) argue that the makeup of the development challenges in South Africa is so considerable such that skills development provides an important background to understanding South Africa's development post-apartheid. They continue to suggest that the dearth of skills in South Africa have been fundamental to other challenges including poverty, unemployment and inequality. McGrath and Akoojee suggest that a substantive numbers of youth between the ages of 18-24 years, estimated to be slightly over 2.8 million in 2008, are outside the labour market, education and training referred to as NEETs. The situation is of extreme concern and warrants for an unprecedented degree of attention to skills development (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007). It is precisely against this backdrop that various quarters in the economy question the performance of SETAs, to an extent that there are proposals put forth to review and overhaul the whole skills system in the country.

According to Allais (2012, p.633) "the SA skills system as a whole was intended to be a demand-led enterprise training policy underpinned by appropriate supply side measures" this assumed that this regulated market provision of training will ensure that training responds to employers' needs. This further assumed an active participation of all skills development stakeholders in various sectors in identifying training needs and competencies required in order to develop new qualification and/or design relevant programmes for education and training (Allais, 2012). As already indicated earlier in statements, it is not necessarily the case on the ground.

Through the Department of Labour (DoL) which was overseeing implementation of the two acts during inception and recently the DHET; the NSDS 2000-2005, 2005-2010; and 2010-2016 attempted to facilitate implementation of SDA and SDLA further by setting performance measures for the SETAs as implementing agencies in order to assess progress. It is through these strategies that SETAs including the ETDPSETA are allocated and required to meet their targets as they implement various skills development programmes such as learnerships, internships for graduates, internships for students who require workplace experience to achieve their qualifications; and skills programmes mainly for workers (Allais, 2012). This target driven mode of implementation digressed a bit from the original intent of skills development intervention. SETAs tended to neglect the quality of theories underpinning skills development programmes and focussed on the numbers crunching. The situation is also applicable to the ETDPSETA as it is facilitating implementation of skills development in the ETD sector.

According to Kruss et al (2012), the phasing in of learnerships was an attempt to respond to growing concerns that the traditional apprenticeship system that had limited reach in terms of race, gender and industrial sector but also lacked structured workplace-learning components. Consequently, the learnerships system was to improve skills development across levels within the workforce and sectors but also provide vocational education and training for unemployed youth in order to create access into the labour market. Furthermore, the learnerships system was at the centre of the new South African inclusive skills development agenda post 1994 (Allais, 2012). In response to this national call, SETAs rolled out these learnerships in massive numbers, which in our opinion compromised the quality underpinning the intentions of the SDA. Unemployed beneficiaries enrolled in these programmes in droves, as employers saw an opportunity for additional pairs of hands were eager to host them in workplaces, all which defeated the intent of skills development. There is anecdotal evidence that this massive roll out of learnerships was an opportunity for income generation whereby young people hopped from one learnership to another in search for much more competitive allowances. The ETD sector is not immune to this phenomenon.

### **2.2.2 Skills Development in the ETD sector**

The ETDPSETA SSP entails a detail profile of the ETD sector, an analysis of the supply and demand of skills in the ETD sector and thereby identifies skills shortages in the sector. The SSP is a five-year document that is translated into the ETDP SETA' five-year strategic plan linked to the government Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). Once approved by the Parliament and Minister, both documents become a basis of an annual Service Level Agreement (SLA) entered between the Minister of Higher Education and Training and the ETDP SETA Board (The Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013). Various quarters also criticize the SSP process for its lack of research methodological rigour mostly attributed to lack of research capacity within the SETA and in the country at large.

This sector driven approach and the five-year establishment period of SETAs poses as a hindrance to their ability to make a difference in reducing the skills shortages in the country. In order to overcome this, the SSP is required to be aligned with other key government priorities as outlined in various plans such as the NSDS, the HRDS –SA, IPAP, the National Growth Path (NGP); and the recent National Development Plan (NDP) (The Department of Education and Training, 2013). This may digress the focus from sector specific interventions to focussing on national imperatives, which may compromise sector imperatives.

In accordance with the ETDPSETA SSP 2010-2016, the following Table 2 below summarises ETDP SETA's skills development programmes in alignment with a number of national policies and national priorities.

**Table 2 below: National Policies addressed by ETDP SETAs Programmes**

NAME OF POLICY	ETDP SETA RESPONSE/INTERVENTION
Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019	The ETDP SETAs APP aims to achieve MTSF targets in relation to teacher education; research; TVET and HEI learner placements using the MTEF
Programme of Action (PoA)	The ETDP SETA APPs first 6 programmes are based on the outputs of the PoA to achieve Outcome 5: A skilled and capable workforce for an inclusive growth path
New Growth Path (NGP) Framework: - Accord 1: National Skills Accord - Accord 2: Basic Education and Partnership with Schools - Accord 4: Green Economy Accord	The NGP manifests itself in the ETDP SETAs APP through an improved SSP (programme1); support for teacher development (programme3); and the placement of interns in workplaces (programme5)
Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) 2010-2030 Commitment 3: Improving the Foundation of Human Development	The entire NSDS III, which the ETDP SETA APP is based on, aims to achieve the HRDS.
National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III	The ETDP SETAs 8 programmes in the APP is conceptualized around the 8 goals of the NSDS III
National Development Plan (NDP), especially the targets contained in chapter 9	The ETDP SETA emphasis on ECD through learnerships, teacher development; and the focus on the public TVET Colleges and HE institutions is to achieve priorities set out in the NDP by 2030
White Paper for Post School Education and Training	The ETDP SETA APP focuses on the implementation of PIVOTAL programmes through bursaries, learnerships and vocational grants; and the support for ABET sub-sector re-engineering are areas proposed by the White Paper.
Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (ISP/TFED-SA) (2011-2025)	The entire programme 3 of the ETDP SETA APP is geared towards achieving targets set out in the ISP/TFED-SA.
SIP 13 and 14	In its 2014/15 APP, the ETDPSETA has committed and contributed R9 000 000.00 for the training of TVET lecturers on scarce and critical skills as part of its contribution to SIP 14.
Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS) (1997)	In setting its disability target 5-percent in its APP, which is above the national target, the ETDP SETA shows commitment to achieve the INDS by committing additional resources for projects involving persons with disability; and in October 2014 the ETDP SETA will facilitate a Disability workshop to shape its strategy.
Policy on Professional Qualifications for Lecturers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (2013)	Programme 3 of the ETDP SETAs APP has a sub-programme, which support public HEIs to develop TVET qualifications, especially the TVET Diploma (PRESET) and TVET Advanced Diploma (NSDET), to achieve the framework set out in the policy.
Policy and the Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part Qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework	The ETDP SETA, through its APP, is developing occupational qualifications based on the needs in line with the policy.
National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (2013)	Programme 7 of the ETDP SETA is APP, outlines an RPL project where 200 ECD and Community Development learners will undergo RPL based on a new model the ETDP SETA is developing through a research partnership with CEPD.
Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Systems	As part of its Operations Division, the ETDP SETA has established a M&E Unit which uses this policy in order to develop its systems in order to monitor and evaluate the APP
The National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011)	

**Source: (ETDPSETA Sector Skills Plan 2010-2016, pp.185-187)**

The ETDPSETA has entered into the key strategic implementation partners such as, the National Department of Basic Education, Provincial Departments of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education and Training, South African Colleges Principals' Organisation, Higher Education South Africa, National Youth Development Agency, National Youth Council, and Association of Private Providers of Education and Training (ETDPSETA 2015 annual performance plan).

While there is an indication from the previous annual reports that the SETA has met most of its targets as set in its annual plan 2013/14, there are worrying observations made by the Auditor General of South Africa in the SETAs audited financial statements as articulated in the previous chapter.

In addition to the above, all SETAs have been plagued with criticism from a number of quarters in the country for not implementing skills development programmes enough to make visible changes as anticipated by the SDA. According to a recently published Ministerial Task Team report on SETA Performance in 2013, SETAs are facing a number of challenges including the manner in which they undertake skill planning. It does seem that SETAs are not implementing skills development initiatives that supported by their stakeholders. The report further suggests that information used for planning and reporting is not consistent and valid to enable the Department of Higher Education and Training to report on SETAs performance (Kraak et al 2013).

In view of all the concerns from various quarters, the Human Resource Development Committee Technical Task Team report suggests to the Minister of Higher Education and Training should consider developing a new skills system that will consider the realignment or review of the SETAs in line with a total new vision, mission and key fundamentals (Kraak et al 2013).

Literature on implementation studies including Durlak and DuPre (2008) and Ram et al. (2013) is making interesting propositions for consideration in this study. They postulate that assessing implementation is of essence for creating ability to make a determination of both the internal and external validity of various development interventions. Ram et al, (2013) further assert that understanding critical success factors for implementation provides an understanding of how these can influence future performance outcomes for



organisations. It is against this back drop that we made a proposition that suggests in order to understand how such implementation has positively or negatively impacted on outcomes of the its interventions, it is critical that we examine and analyse how the ETDPSETA is implementing its programme.

## **2.3 Implementation of skills development programmes, past studies, methods, data, findings and conclusions**

We continued to review literature on similar past and current studies it however became evident that there are no empirical studies on the assessment of implementation of skills development programmes especially in relation to the ETD sector. We then reviewed other similar studies conducted in other sectors, mostly in other countries that have assessed implementation of programmes or projects. In view of the nature of our study, our search of related literature focused on studies in the field of programme management/implementation, project management, programme implementation evaluation and programme performance. We are presenting them here below in chronological order and in accordance with their research themes. We must declare upfront that with the lack of extensive empirical studies in the aforementioned fields especially implementation. We have included studies that have not necessarily collected primary data but have extensively reviewed documents and literature and are presenting interesting findings. This we found useful for this research especially in respect to introduction and understanding of important constructs and concepts.

### **2.3.1 Critical success factors to programme' success and the link to organisational success**

According to Cooke-Davies, (2009) despite years of voluminous research done on project management, the subject continues to be a disappointment to a number of interest groups. It is against this backdrop that Cooke-Davies (2009) embarked on this study in an effort to identify critical success factors for projects success. Cooke-Davies argues that to be able to identify and isolate these success factors, it is critical to respond comprehensively to the following three separate questions, (i) 'what factors are critical to project management success?' (ii) 'What factors are critical to success on an individual project' and (iii) 'what factors lead to consistently successful projects?'

Cooke-Davies used various methods to gather data, which entail analysis of responses from hundred and thirty-six European projects implemented between 1994 and 2000 by twenty-three organisations, and an analysis of six bodies of knowledge. Their analysis of their findings identified twelve critical success factors and are: (i) adequacy of company-wide education on the concepts of risk management, (ii) maturity of organisational processes for assigning ownership of risks; (iii) adequacy in the maintenance of risk register; (iv) adequacy of an up-to-date risk management plan; (v) adequacy of documentation of organisational responsibilities on projects; (vi) keeping projects' duration to far below 3yrs; (vii) allowing changes to project scope through mature scope change control processes; (viii) maintenance of the integrity of the performance measurement baselines; (ix) resourcing of programme practices that align to corporate strategy or objectives; (x) development of a suite of project, programme and portfolio metrics that provided direct line of sight feedback on current performance, (xi) anticipate future success to allow for decision making; and (xii) an effective means of learning and development from experiences embedded on continuous improvement.

Cooke-Davies concluded that even though literature on project management was silent on overall organisational success, the study showed that there is both direct and indirect links between project success and organisational success.

We noted as a limitation in this study its inability to articulate clearly the methods used for data collection and explanatory or theoretical frameworks that used to interpret data and to come these conclusions.

### **2.3.2 Impact of implementation on programme outcomes**

Durlak and DuPre, (2008) conducted a study assessing the impact of implementation on programme outcomes, in doing that, also attempt to understand specific factors that affect implementation. They purely conducted a literature review of published and unpublished studies that were relevant to their research questions. The literature reviewed dated as far as back in 1976 when research on implementation begun. Their literature search focussed on quantitative studies that documented the impact of implementation on programme

outcomes. They further reviewed both quantitative and qualitative studies that identified factors affecting implementation.

They were able to review about 483 of the 542 reports documenting the impact of implementation on the outcomes of the programmes. The results concluded that indeed implementation does have an influence on the programme outcomes. The findings further noted that there is no hundred-per cent perfect implementation, as there were differences in implementation across various providers.

In attempting to respond their second research question, which is identifying factors that are affecting implementation, they used a framework for successful implementation referred to in their study as the Ecological Framework for understanding effective implementation. The framework presents five keys elements influencing implementation as (i) innovations or programmes, (ii) providers, (iii) communities, (iv) delivery system or organisational capacity, and (v) training and technical assistance. They argue that under favourable conditions, variables in each of the elements constantly engage with each other and lead to a successful implementation.

In their in depth discussion of their findings, Durlak and DuPre (2008) found that while the relationship between implementation and the programme outcomes was confirmed, a major implication from these findings suggested that assessment of implementation is very critical for programme evaluation. They note that evaluations that lack information on implementation are flawed and incomplete. They further assert that without data on implementation, such a study may not be able to document precisely the nature of program implemented, or how to interpreted outcomes data. This we found very interesting and had a bearing to our study.

The limitation in the study was that the researchers limited their study to literature review without further interrogating the findings of the study through a further rigorous empirical investigation. This limits generalization of the findings to other contexts.

### **2.3.3 Relation between implementation strategy and the success of the intervention**

In the same year as the abovementioned, Enz (2008) examined the frequency of use of various implementation strategies presented in the study such as intervention, participation, persuasion and edict for different types of service innovations or programmes. Enz (2008) further examined the relationships between the type of strategy used and success of the innovation or programme. Success in the innovation according to Enz, suggests the achievement of programme or innovation outcomes. While the aforementioned study by Durlak and DuPre was in health promotion and prevention settings, this particular study was in hospitality and tourism industry. It is noted that while Durlak and DuPre (2008, p 329) defined implementation as “what a programmes consists of when it is delivered in a particular setting”, Enz, 2008 presents implementation as involvement of workers who are immediately affected by the change by using direction, participation and consultation approaches to introduce the change. By the way, Enz (2008) defines the manner in which a new programme or innovation is communicated to employees involved in execution as implementation strategies. Rogers cited in Enz (2008) refers to the previous concept as diffusion, which is defined as the manner in which new programme is communicated to various players. This clearly shows some inconsistencies and overlaps in the definition of concepts, which pose as challenge in implementation research.

Nonetheless, Enz collected data from the Walt Disney hotel chain in North America through a survey questionnaire whereby General Managers of various hotels indicated various innovations implemented and various implementation strategies used to implement these.

The general findings of the study suggest that using a combination of participatory, persuasion, interventions and edict implementation strategies have a tendency to promote innovation adaptation. However, Enz found that participation was the most effective implementation strategy for most new programmes. The results further revealed that the nature of service innovation dictates an appropriate implementation strategy. Study findings also note that future implementation efforts should always attempt to place leaders as facilitators of service innovation rather than giving directives for immediate actions.

### 2.3.4 Strategies for improving intervention development, implementation and evaluation

Another study conducted was by Planas, (2008) who argues that interventions that were efficacious in the phase of design phase do not necessarily translate into success when implemented in practice. Hence, the study investigated strategies to improve the alignment between development, implementation and evaluation of interventions. It was in a pharmaceutical based practice environment. The study describes strategies to improve specific issues related to the intervention reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation and maintenance. Some of these issues are similar to the eight aspects of implementation earlier presented by Durlak and DuPre (2008) referred to as fidelity, dosage, quality, participant's response, programme differentiation, monitoring of control/comparison group, programme reach, and adaptability. We will extensively interrogate these later in this report.

The study utilised what the authors call the RE-AIM model (see table below) to frame various strategies that can be used to link programme design, implementation and evaluation practice. The model is comprised of five dimensions called: reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, maintenance, and the use of the dimensions interact with each other at various levels of the context to improve translation of the innovation into practice. According to Planas, (2008) the model accounts for both individual and organisational factors that have an influence on the intervention's impact. Planas argues that the important feature of the model is that it moves away from short-term efficacy of restricted samples within controlled settings to longer-term effectiveness in practical settings. The study concluded that application of the model could improve the quality of the intervention during implementation and the impact thereof.

**Table 3: RE\_AIM Dimensions and levels**

Column1	Column2	Column3
Dimension	Definition	Level
Reach	Participation rate and representativeness of participants	Individual
Effectiveness	Effects on primary and multiple outcomes of interests, including negative outcomes	Individual
Adoption	Participation rate and representativeness of settings	Setting
Implementation	Extent to which intervention is delivered as intended	Setting
Maintenance	Long-term effects of intervention and extent of continuation of intervention	Individual and setting

Source: Planas, 2008

In the discussion of the findings, Planas (2008) argues that practice based interventions must be designed, implemented and evaluated in order determine whether they are in fact effective and sustainable in real-world settings. To be able to do that during planning phases, practitioners must thoroughly interrogate specific issues relating to each of the dimensions of RE-AIM i.e. reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation and maintenance. Planas argues that RE-AIM provides a comprehensive set of criteria for programme design, implementation and evaluation and accommodates various stakeholders at varying levels of participation.

The limitation of the study is that it does not provide or backed- up by an empirical sound methodological approach to its research.

### **2.3.5 Challenges to successful implementation and programme management**

Shehu and Akintoye conducted their study in 2010 in the United Kingdom' (UK) construction environment. The researchers acknowledge that the concept of programme management in the construction sector is new and with varying definitions. It is precisely why they commenced their study with a working definition of the concept. They define programme management as “an efficient vehicle to successfully deliver the improvements and changes” Shehu and Akintoye (2010, p26). The purpose of their study was to examine in depth the challenges to effective programme management and implementation in order to provide more insight in managing them.

They first conducted an in depth literature review which led to them identifying the seven major challenges in relation to programme management. These entailed: (i) lack of commitment from business leaders in embracing the practice, (ii) late delivery of projects, (iii) lack of cross functional communication, working and coordination between projects, (iv) lack of alignment of projects to strategy, (v) lack of an appropriate way to measure project benefits, (vi) lack of resources to analyse project data, people and financial constraints; and (vii) lack of training” (Shehu and Akintoye, 2010, pp. 267-28).

The researchers further used a survey questionnaire sent to various companies in the construction sector. Of the one thousand three hundred and eighty questionnaires sent out, only hundred and nineteen were usable for analysis. Shehu and Akintoye (2010) argue

that the poor response rate was attributed to various reasons but mainly attributed to the industry' lack of understanding of the concept of programme management. Further, on, they conducted semi-structured interviews with participants sampled through snowballing sampling and referral. The used NVivo 7 to analyse data gathered through semi-structured interviews. A t-test, Cronbach x, factor analysis, Bartlett's and Kaise-Meyer-Olkin tests were conducted and used to analyse quantitative data received through the responses of the survey. The findings confirmed the seven major challenges to implementation identified through triangulation of literature, and lack of awareness ranked the highest challenge to implementation.

Shehu and Akintoye (2010) further developed a framework for effective implementation of programme management. The stages of framework include dimensions such as unawareness to awareness, understanding, programme planning, piloting, implementation, and customisation and consolidation. It served as guide to successful implementation and practice of programme management.

The researchers concluded that programme management facing challenges in the process of adoption, implementation and practice. They categorized the challenges at two levels: implementation stage – a point when the organisation is in the process of moving from project management to programmatic approach; and practice stage and at this point, the main challenge involves lack of commitment and buy-in from directors. Other factors that affected implementation included programme control, human related aspects and political aspects; and these were associated with challenges related to practicing programme management. The researchers further proposed a need for effective and proactive planning reorientation of the discipline within the industry. They identified training through continuous professional development, workshops and other means as priority for fostering knowledge. Shehu and Akintoye, (2010) introduced six-stage implementation, which entailed awareness, understanding, planning, piloting, implementation, and consolidation.

It is our view that this mixed methods approach to research presents a very high likelihood of generalizing the findings to the entire industry and possible to other related sectors because of its sound methodological approaches to empirical research.

### **2.3.6 Development of reliable method of specifying intervention components for changing behaviour**

This is a study protocol developed by Michie et al (2011) with the express purpose of presenting reliable methods of specifying intervention components or techniques specifically directed at changing behaviour. They define behaviour change interventions as those attempting to increase physical activity, adherence behaviours and screening attendance, which are usually complicated and entail a number of interacting components or aspects. These components create difficulty in reporting, replicating, implementing and evaluating the intervention. Michie et al suggest that the methods should include; techniques to facilitate change, procedures for delivering the techniques including who delivers the intervention, who the recipient is, how often and how long implementation of interventions should be. In what format and context delivery of intervention should be.

They developed the study protocol in three stages with the first stage involving developing the nomenclature that entailed refining the list definitions and techniques. Experts were identified to define and refine concepts and attributes until an agreed upon list with clearly and non-redundant techniques. The agreed upon nomenclature would be tested in order to develop reliable and generalizable nomenclature. They proposed the Delphi method for consensus development; materials developed and prepared to facilitate the project. The second phase entailed evaluating the nomenclature, which involves nomenclature training resource material, decoding and interpreting behaviour changing intervention protocols. The third phase involved prototyping the nomenclature (Michie et al, 2011).

The above study protocol merely provides guidelines for the development of a reliable method for identifying intervention components directed at changing behaviour. Understanding the protocol will assist in strengthening scientific basis for designing, implementation, reporting and evaluating complex interventions. Until tested through an empirical study, it remains a guideline.

### **2.3.7 Key success factors in implementing strategy**



According to Alamsjah (2011) with fast growing economies, competition becomes fierce amongst various players in the economy, it becomes more difficult for organizations to implement strategies, and the role of middle-level managers becomes very critical as executors of strategies, thus the research study. The objective of the research was to “investigate the key success factors involved in successful implementation of business strategies through middle-level managers’ perception as well as providing Indonesian viewpoint for the topic” (Alamsjah, 2011, p.1444).

Based on an in-depth review of literature, the researcher collated a list of eleven important dimensions in strategy implementation. It entailed: (i) degree of uncertainty, (ii) clarity of strategy, (iii) organizational structure, (iv) corporate culture, (v) CEO and top management’ involvement, (vi) people’s competencies and commitment, (vii) knowledge management, (viii) managing change, (ix) performance management, (x) communication, and (xi) execution plan (Alamsjah, 2011).

To confirm and prioritize list of the abovementioned strategy implementation dimensions, a quantitative approach to the research was conducted using a survey questionnaire, which was sent to hundred and fifty eight middle-level managers from Indonesian publicly listed companies who were participating in an executive education programme run by BINUS business school. The participants’ responses to the survey were statistically analysed using SPSS and ANOVA.

Findings revealed that five of the eleven dimensions were most critical in order of priority and were as follows: (i) corporate culture followed by, (ii) a clear strategy followed by, (iii) communication followed by, (iv) execution plan, and then (v) competencies. Therefore, corporate culture had a significant influence on successful strategy implementation.

It would have been interesting to triangulate the findings with some qualitative research strategies.

### **2.3.8 Critical success factors for implementation success**

This study was recently conducted by Ram, Corkindale & Wu, (2013) who utilised an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system project to examine the linkage between the

critical success factors (CSFs) for successful project delivery defined as completion on time, within the budget, as expected and to the satisfaction of the user; and post project performance which lead to organisational success. Ram et al (2013) argue that knowledge of the role and influence of these CSFs and their impact on implementation success, and post implementation performance outcome was not adequately researched yet critical. They point out that an understanding of these linkages will assist organisations to plan and implement their projects successfully. They further argue that while there is linkage between implementation success and organisational performance, they are also distinct variables measured separately.

They conducted extensive literature review on implementation, post implementation organisational performance, and CSFs with their influence on organisational performance. Based on the literature, they chose four CSF (i) project management, (ii) training and education, (iii) business process re-engineering, (iv) systems integration to examine their effects on implementation success and organisational performance. This formed the research' conceptual framework.

They further on conducted a hard copy and web-based survey as a form of collecting data from various Australian companies that were implementing the ERP project. They obtained the sample frame from buying various MarketBase databases. Of two thousand and two organizations invited to participate, they received back two hundred and seventeen responses. Results were analysed using various statistical software package – Smart PLS3.0. The results of the survey concluded that the conceptual model developed earlier met the quality criteria.

The conclusions confirmed that project implementation and output performance improvement are distinct separate constructs measured separately. The findings further suggest that project managers need to identify goals and priorities for each construct and thereafter develop varying focussed strategies to achieve these. The findings further confirmed that of the four CSFs identified, project management and training/education are critical success factors for implementation.

Ram et al (2013) acknowledged limitations in their study such as that the study did not consider other intervening variables such as the fact that units of analysis were

organisations yet individuals who represented individual expectations filled in the questionnaire. This suggests that views of organizational performance were rather subjective judgements of individuals (Ram et al, 2013). The acknowledgement of these limitations is important and suggests one area that requires reflection.

### **2.3.9 Evaluation framework for development projects**

Ngacho and Das (2014) conducted this study in an attempt to propose a multidimensional performance evaluation framework for development projects using a case of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kenya. The researchers argue that development projects have a critical role in the growth of economies while there is high possibility of them creating negative impacts on other areas such social and environmental dimensions. The researchers further argue that most evaluations on projects place more focus on costs, time and quality, which merely capture the economic aspects and tend to ignore other aspects of the development. In view of that, they presented five pillars of projects based framework for the CDF projects (Ngacho and Das, 2014).

The study developed a comprehensive and multidimensional performance evaluation framework that captured all essential features of development projects. Researchers used a quantitative research approach to conduct the study, which used a survey questionnaire that sent to all stakeholders associated with five hundred and eighty six (586) of the four thousand (4000) CDF projects implemented between 2003 and 2011. They used stratified and judgemental sampling to reflect the diversity of stakeholders. Trained field workers collected data. The response rate was moderate showing a 68-percent rate. They used SPSS software to analyse data. Based on the outcomes of the factor analysis, they developed a theoretical framework of construction project and performance framework with the following key performance indicators: (i) cost performance, (ii) time performance, (iii) quality performance (iv) safety performance, (v) site disputes performance and (vi) environmental performance (Ngacho and Das, 2014).

The results confirmed that they could not only use cost, time and quality to measure the performance of development projects, two additional measures were necessary entailing site disputes measure and environmental impact measure. Another finding confirmed that

the quality measure ranked number five of the six measures, which was in contrast with usual project management literature that ranked it high (Ngacho and Das, 2014).

In our view, the study represented a sound methodological approach to research however failed to reflect on possible other limitations to the study.

#### **2.3.10 Assessment and improvement approach to implementation**

Another similar to the above study conducted in 2015 by Sun, Ni and Lam in 2015. The study expanded on the four critical success factors for implementation of enterprise resource planning. Sun et al examined eighty critical success factors for implementation. In the study, a systematic assessment and improvement approach to implementation in three companies in China used as case studies.

The main object of the study as articulated in Sun et al (2015, p.41) was “to develop and validate a practical approach for assessing and improving critical success factors’ performance during implementation in Chinese companies”. They took up the eighty CSFs and divided them into five stages of implementation by linking CSFs to each stage, assessed the performance of each stage, and included a continuous improvement within the performance of each stage. The stages identified were referred to (i) organisational readiness, (ii) selection, (iii) implementation, (iv) final preparation and (v) the live-run (Sun et al, 2015).

They used a multiple methods research design entailing: (i) Delphi Method for linking CSFs to implementation stage, developing key performance indicators (KPIs) for each stage and assigning weighting for each KPI; (ii) the Dumpster-Shafer combination methods to seek inputs from experts to determine the magnitude of individual KPIs’ influence and lastly (iii) the action case study for solving practical problems on site through a reiterative problem solving process and learning new knowledge (Sun et al, 2015). During the reiterative process of learning and correcting, they used a systematic performance assessment and improvement flow with the three companies chosen through a theoretical sampling process.

The findings of the study concluded that the eighty critical success factors are not static in nature because of the dynamic nature of implementation. A dynamic lifecycle perspective needs should always be considered during implementation. The researchers acknowledged that the results could not be generalised to other countries however provides a model and procedure of selecting critical success factors, the associated KPIs and putting corrective measures in place (Sun et al. 2015). The limitations are acknowledged and understandable as the research design was also case study and reflects views of individuals in the three participating case studies. In its nature, a case study does not serve purpose of generalization of findings but understanding of a phenomenon in its context.

In concluding this sub-section, it is evident from the interrogation of these studies presented above that implementation field is a fairly new field and requires more debates and consensus reached on a number of constructs, concepts and terminology that are used interchangeably by researchers to mean various things. Most of these studies conducted lack information on methods/methodology, which is in our view an indictment to implementation research. However, information was adequate for learning, guiding and directing our research study.

Pulzl and Treib (2007) also argue that implementation lacks adequate research attributed to the long on-going debates between two schools of thoughts: top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation, which we avoided paying too much attention to in this study.

The studies presented above highlight a number of implementation issues that require attention at various levels of development interventions (diagnostic, formulation, implementation and evaluation), because in one way or the other these issues have an impact on the achievement of interventions' outcomes and sustenance. Our study sought to interrogate and understand these issues, and their applicability in the ETD context.

## **2.4 Introduction to the broad field of study**

This subsection introduces the broad field of study. It does that by describing monitoring and evaluation, its purpose and presents major components of the field of study. It

continues to discuss processes in monitoring and evaluation, established facts in the field and concludes with key debates and issues in the monitoring and evaluation field.

### **2.4.1 Describing monitoring and evaluation**

In recent years, governments, public institutions and organisations are under tremendous pressure to account on results of various policies, programmes and projects they have implemented. Citizens, funding agencies, and stakeholders are set on demanding answers to various types of questions in relation to services delivered. It is against this backdrop that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has suddenly become an important tool for managers in these institutions to assist in responding to these questions.

In describing M&E, Gorgens and Kusek, (2009) suggest that it is a powerful public management tool that assists institutions especially governments to respond to what they refer to as the ‘so what’ questions. If hundreds of young people have undergone learnerships or internships for a certain period, so what? How have those programmes changed their lives for better? According to Gorgens and Kusek, M&E becomes an appropriate tool to support management in responding to such questions. Kusek and Rist, (2004) concur with the definition and further argue that M&E is a management tool that begins to compel governments and others to improve the way they achieve results. They argue that M&E provides an opportunity for a performance feedback mechanism that allows organisations to reflect and continuously improve on the ways they conduct business.

However, the Public Service Commission (2008) argues that it is important that organisations or institutions need to be very clear of what should be the focus of M&E in their organisations otherwise it will not serve its intended purpose. The Commission argues that it is critical that M&E becomes a participatory process informed by M&E clients on what to monitor and evaluate.

M&E has over a period evolved from its traditional focus on implementation, towards a result-focus on the achievement of results. This approach responds to the earlier posed ‘so what’ question rather than focusing on what has been implemented (Kusek and Rist,

2004). This articulated clearly in a forward statement made by the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

*“Efficient or well-managed projects and outputs will lose their relevance if they yield no discernible improvement in development conditions and ultimately in peoples’ lives” (UNDP, 2002, pg. i).*

#### **2.4.2 Purpose of monitoring and evaluation**

Taking into consideration the aforementioned description of M&E, the UNDP (2002) states that M&E’ main purpose is to measure and assess performance of a programme or projects or institutions in order to manage outputs and outcome defined as results. This measurement does not only focus on outputs and outcomes but also assesses various contributory aspects within development initiatives including partnerships, advocacy, implementation and coordination.

The UNDP (2002) and the Public Service Commission (2008) concur in articulating some of the purposes of M&E. They argue that:

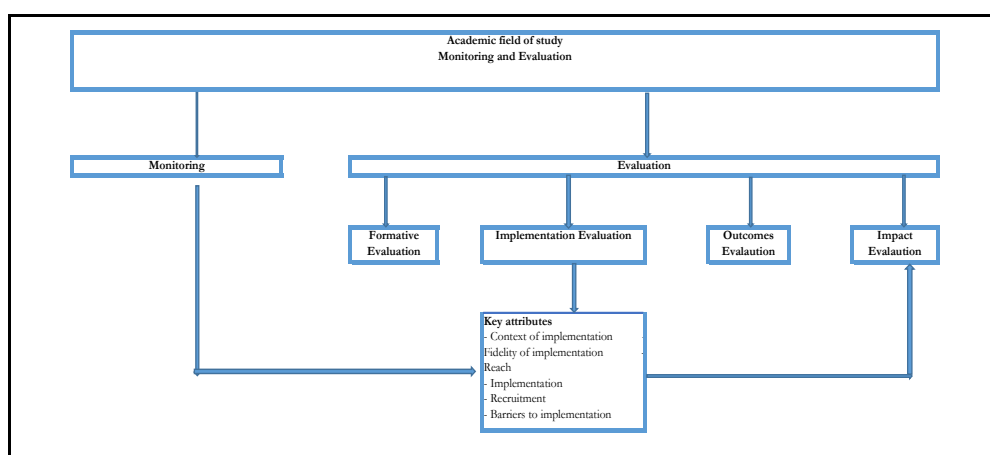
- (i) M&E enhances management processes by providing information as evidence for management decision including allocation of resources to a particular intervention, choice of a particular strategy, policy and/or programme design and implementation.
- (ii) M&E further enhances organisational learning from experience, learning described as an on-going dynamic process of reflecting and searching for experience, knowledge and relevance. However, the Public Service Commission suggests that translating findings from M&E into learning is a challenge for most organisations and requires a culture of inquiry and investigation rather than a culture of response and reporting.
- (iii) M&E also enhances accountability especially of public officials appointed to serve the interests of their constituencies. M&E provides information in a structured, formalised and transparent way to allow for any public scrutiny on services rendered by various institutions including public and private entities.
- (iv) M&E findings also assist users to galvanise support for programmes in forms of more funding/allocation of resources, and advocating for continued or termination of a programme or policy.

All of the purposes articulated above are interlinked and inter-related in a continuous process, which ultimately builds capacities of various roles players in a programme, institution, projects including beneficiaries themselves (UNDP, 2002).

### 2.4.3 Major Components of Monitoring and Evaluation

While it is generally accepted that M&E is a powerful instrument for result based management, it also must be understood as two different components that are complimentary of each other. This understanding is very critical, as these require different planning and resourcing. In this sub-section, we will present the two components: monitoring and evaluation; however, we are going to discuss in depth the component of evaluation later in sub-section 2.4.7. Figure 1 here below summarises these components, their linkages and key attributes to this study:

Figure 1: Key Components of M&E



#### 2.4.3.1 Monitoring

Gorgens and Kusek (2009) simply refer to monitoring as routine monitoring, which is an exercise that provides data used on a day-to-day basis to explain changes or no changes at the outcomes and impacts level of analysis. It also provides real time information used daily for programme planning, implementation and reporting.

Kusek and Rist (2004) in summing up the OECD' definition of monitoring here presented below, they conclude that monitoring provides information on the status quo of a policy, programme and/or project at any given point in time. It is a



*“A continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and main stakeholders of an on-going development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objective and progress in the use of allocated resources” (OECD, 2002a p.27 in Kusek and Rist, 2004, p.12).*

Once more, it is important to emphasize that much as the components of M&E are separate, they are very much complementary. While monitoring activities give signal that initiatives are going on or off track, evaluation assists in clarifying the realities and trends observed during a monitoring exercise (Kusek and Rist, 2004).

#### **2.4.4 Processes in monitoring and evaluation**

Based on the aforementioned assertions made on M&E, fundamental or central to its activities is data and/or information management in order to empower its users to make required comparative judgements. There are a number of processes involved in executing the M&E activity and these revolve around data management. These processes entail sourcing of data, collection of data, collating/capturing of data, analysing and interpreting data, and reporting on the findings from data analysis (Gorgens and Rist, 2004).

Because data is fundamental to M&E activities, Gorgens and Rist refer to it as the fuel of an M&E system, and therefore of essence that it is of highest quality. They argue that for data to be of high quality, it is imperative that it adheres to six dimensions of quality referred to as accuracy, reliability, completeness, precision, timeliness and integrity (Gorgens and Rist, 2004). The table below presents operational definitions of these dimensions.

Table 4: Six dimensions of data and operational definitions

Dimensions of data quality	Operational definition
Accuracy	Also known as validity. Accurate data are considered correct: the data measure what they are intended to measure. Accurate data minimize error (e.g. recording or interviewer bias, transcription error, sampling error) to point of being negligible.
Reliability	The data generated by a program' information system based on protocols and procedures that do not change according to who is using them and when or how often they are used. The data are reliable because they are measured and collected consistently.
Completeness	Completeness means that information system from which the results are derived is appropriately inclusive: it represents the complete list of eligible persons or units and not a fraction of the list.
Precision	Precision means that the data have sufficient detail. For example, an indicator requires the number of individuals who received HIV counselling & testing and received their results, differentiated by sex of individuals. An information system that lacks precision if it not designed to record the sex of the individual who received counselling & testing.
Timeliness	Data are timely when they are up-to-date (current), and when the information is available on time. Timeliness is affected by: (1) the rate at which the program' information system is updated; (2) the rate of change of actual program activities; and (3) when the information is actually used or required.
Integrity	Integrity is when data generated by a program' information system are protected from deliberate bias or manipulation for political or personal reasons.

Source: USAID, 2007 in Gorgens and Rist, 2004, pgs.253-254

The aforementioned data management processes revolve around a number of key M&E elements that form a critical part of M&E and are described by UNDP (2002) as follows: inputs commonly understood as the financial, human material, technological and information resources that are allocated to a particular development intervention; activities that use a range of inputs to produce the desired results; outputs expressed as final products, goods, or services delivered; outcomes expressed as medium term results for the beneficiaries of interventions that are a consequent of outputs delivered; and impacts which are expressed as results of achieving outcomes such as reduction of poverty.

According to Kusek and Rist (2004), some of these M&E processes entail conducting organisational or institutional readiness assessment to determine issues relating to organisational culture, leadership and buy-in. Processes also entail the development of performance indicators against which monitoring and evaluation will be conducted.

Other processes involve setting of baseline targets and the selection of results/targets against which measurement will take place (Kusek and Rist, 2004).

#### **2.4.5 Established facts in monitoring and evaluation**

While there are a number of issues and debates in field of M&E, there is also agreement in some areas that one can assume as facts. The following are some of the established facts in the field of monitoring and evaluation.

- (i) Critical to a functional M&E system is a well-developed and sound results chain, which articulates inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. The UNDP (2002) asserts that the results chain can be extended into a results matrix or results framework as referred to by the World Bank (2012), to include indicators, baseline targets, actual targets, means of verification, risks and assumptions, role players and indicative resources. According to Brandon, Smith and Ofir (2014), it is important to note that embedded in the results framework or matrix is a theory of change built through a stakeholder driven process that requires iterative interactions and sound knowledge of other existing framework.
- (ii) Monitoring and evaluation happen at two different but closely connected levels. Monitoring tends to focus on the inputs, activities outputs, which we earlier referred to as products, goods and services that come from processing of inputs through programme or project activities. While evaluation tends to focus on the outcome and impacts of development initiatives, which entail the changes in the conditions of development beneficiaries (UNDP, 2002).
- (iii) Fundamental to M&E is proper planning that clearly articulates anticipated results usually expressed in the theory of change. Without proper articulation of the theory of change it will be difficult to collect data and thus without data the basis for evaluations will be weak (UNDP, 2002). This referred to as a failure to articulate what we wish to learn from monitoring and evaluation.
- (iv) The South African Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (2007) argues that while M&E is a good public management tool, it is

complex, multi-disciplinary and skills intensive. It is more complex in government as it requires in depth understanding of varied interactions between government planning, budgeting and implementation processes. Orkin and Hirchowitz (2009) support the latter view by further postulating that M&E activities are technical, heavily rely on sound research designs, sampling methods data analysis and clear communication of results. They continue to postulate that in many instance M&E exercises fail to adhere to statistical principles which leads in many instance to incorrect inferences being drawn and thus inappropriate programmes/projects/policies being implemented, serious errors are made and wrong decisions taken. Brandon et al (2014) concur with this assertion and further argue that the expertise should not be only an external resource but also imbedded within organisations and within programme personnel.

#### **2.4.6 Key debates and issues in the field of M&E**

There are number of issues that frequently arise in the field of M&E and it is important for practitioners in the field be aware of these in order to be effective and appropriate in their responses. The following are some these issues and debates.

- (i) Recent years have brought about an increasing focus of evaluation over monitoring in particular impact evaluation. This brought about by what is termed results focus agenda, which has raised eyebrows within the development community. It has been widely accepted that monitoring does not tell anything about the success of programmes or projects and hence an increased interest in evaluation of impact. This acceptance has also brought debates about the appropriate methodology used in conducting impact evaluation, some argue for quantitative methods while others argue for qualitative. White (2010) argues that this debate is unnecessary, as issues under investigation rather than methods must drive evaluations. According to White, the evaluation questions must determine the best available methods, which may be either quantitative or qualitative or even mixed methods.
- (ii) The other debate relates to suggestions that M&E are distinct processes that focus on different levels or phases. Some literature suggests that monitoring focuses on

project/programme processes, inputs and outputs while evaluation focuses on outcomes and impacts. This assumes a separation of implementation and results. The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) (2007) suggests that the debate is unnecessary as they postulate that, while evaluations tend to focus at project/programme impact and sustainability, they also can be formative – conducted to review progress in order to predict the project's likely impact and highlight possible adjustments in the design.

- (iii) Some of the debates relate to monitoring of poverty reduction strategies in developing countries. According to the GDSRC (2007), monitoring of poverty reduction strategies faces challenges in relating to underinvestment, lack of coordination and weak national capacity. The debates have been around how to overcome these constraints, which institutional arrangements for monitoring work best to deal with the constraints; and how different players can contribute to this process. Recommendations suggest that in depth clarification of indicators. Suggestions show the need for effective use of indicators to enhance development outcomes. Indicators should be fully unpacked and understood by practitioners, and command support from a broad range of national stakeholders/governments (GDSRC, 2007).

## **2.4.7 Evaluation as a field of study**

### **2.4.7.1 Describing evaluation**

While we agree that evaluation is interlinked with monitoring, Gorgens and Kusek (2009) describe evaluation as a systematic and objective assessment process intended to determine the worth or significance of a particular activity, policy or programme. It can be a planned, ongoing or a completed programme, but emphasize that it is systematic and objective. Rossi and Freeman (1993, p.5) in Gorgens and Kusek (2009) suggest that it is a social research procedure that attempts to assess conceptualization, design, implementation and the utility of a programme or policy.

Because of its intention to determine merit or shortcoming, it requires standards be in place for any judgement made on whether there is merit or not. It therefore requires clear

definition of appropriate standards against measurement of performance and thus evaluation is a process of comparison to a standard (Public Service Commission, 2008). In essence:

*“Evaluation aims to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives. It should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into decision making process...” (OECD, 2002a, p.21 in Kusek and Rist, 2004, p.12).*

Another critical aspect according to GSDRC (2007, p.19): *“Evaluations are more than a technical process. They have the capacity to determine access to resources and funding fate of programmes. It is inevitable therefore that they will be subject to pressures from stakeholders to produce favourable assessment or to avoid addressing sensitive issues.”* Hence political.

#### **2.4.7.2 Purposes of evaluation**

According to GSDRC (2007), evaluations assist managers, governments and development partners to learn from experience in order to be able to provide accountability for the use of resources to parliaments and citizens who are taxpayers. Kusek & Rist (2004) also argue that evaluations provide information on strategy, operations and lessons learned. They argue that evaluations must have high levels of impartiality, usefulness, technical adequacy, stakeholder involvement, value for money and feedback.

#### **2.4.7.3 Components of evaluation**

According to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) (2005) in GSDRC (2007), an effective evaluation process plays an integral role in a project or a programme. It is therefore important to know and understand various components of evaluation. Gorgens and Kusek (2009) present five types of evaluations presented and discussed hereunder as components of evaluation.

**Formative evaluations** assess strengths and weakness of a programme prior its implementation. It is proposed that it is used during the development of a new programmes or when an existing programme is being modified or being used for a new

target group or setting. Its intention is to show whether programme recipients will understand or need the proposed programme elements. It allows for a process of modifying the programme before roll out of the implementation. Typical research questions this evaluation answers are: (i) is it necessary to focus on a specific target group. (ii) What other interventions worked in this context (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009).

**Process evaluation** examines the procedures and activities involved in the implementation of the programmes. This evaluation entails examining administrative and organisational aspects of the programme. It fulfils audit and monitoring function by testing how well the programme is working. It serves a quality improvement process. It further shows the extent to which the implementation programme deviates from its original design and whether the programme is accessible and acceptable to the intended beneficiaries (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). Kusek & Rist (2004) on the other hand suggest additional benefits of a process evaluation over routine monitoring and are that process evaluation reveals some of the intangible aspects of implementation such as political support, institutional readiness for change and trust in management to drive the change initiatives. Typical research questions this component of evaluation answers are: (i) Are field workers working in the right areas or places as per the design? (ii) Is programmes staff carrying out all required implementation steps (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009)?

**Outcomes evaluation** on the other hand is utilised to gather descriptive data on the project and to document short-term results. Short-term results are immediate effects on the beneficiaries of programmes and attempt to assess the causal link between the intervention and the desired outcomes. It answers the following questions: (i) Is the intervention working. (ii) Is the intervention making the intended difference such changes in knowledge or behaviour because of the interventions (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009).

While **impact evaluation** is a systematic identification of long-term effects of interventions on individuals, households, institutions etc. as result of interventions implemented. In designing such evaluations, measuring changes that directly relate to the effects of the interventions or other unrelated factors are considered. It requires designed research protocols, original data as baselines and technically trained researchers. It takes place during the implementation of programmes at appropriate intervals or at the end of

a programme. It particularly seeks to answer the following research questions: (i) What effects did the programme have? (ii) Have the beneficiaries' behaviours changed? (iii) Are intervention efforts affecting change on a population level (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009)?

White (2010: 154) in Copestake (2014) brings out an important aspect in the definition of impact evaluation, which acknowledges overlaps with outcomes evaluation. This is due to the fact its discussions is usually in cooperated in discussions of both outcomes and impact indicators. Copestake (2014) argues that while this definition acknowledges that evaluations of impact answer the attribution question, it is important that it answers how the intervention works and whether it constitutes value for money (cost benefit analysis).

#### **2.4.7.4 Processes involved in the field of evaluation**

Khadar (2003) proposes four distinct processes involved in conducting an evaluation. The first stage entailing a preparatory phase, which involves describing the information needed, the environment/context and identification of the target users. It then moves to the second phase of planning and design, which involve identifying primary objectives of the evaluation and clearly defining the indicators for measurement. The third phase, which is referred to as the monitoring and measurement phase and entails data gathering on inputs, outputs, benefits, costs and indicators. The last phase, which involves the communication of results aimed at providing evaluation feedback to various target interest groups and stakeholders (Khadar, 2003).

On another hand, Mensa-Bonsu (2010) proposes a twelve-stage process that begins with the decision to conduct an evaluation, followed by the pre-study and development of the approach phase. This entails collecting and analysis background information, which is going to identify key evaluation questions that are going to inform the modalities and a phase where choice of methodologies is decided. The third phase entails identification of possible relevant partners that are going to be part of a management group, which leads to the fourth phase of the processes. Once done, a process of developing the terms of reference (ToRs), tendering and selection of the evaluation team. All of these constitute the fifth and sixth phases of the process. Mensa-Bonsu further proposes the seventh phase, which is the inception phase, which entails the initial analysis of background information and related documentation that will culminate into the production of the



inception phase report presented to the evaluation team. The eighth phase entails the actual in-depth review of documents, fieldwork and data analysis. Baker refers to it as the data collection phase, which takes a longer period. As part of ninth phase, the thematic papers and working papers are developed and presented to the evaluation reference group. All this leads to the draft report, final reporting and the dissemination of the evaluation (Mensa-Bonsu, 2010). Critical to all of the aforementioned phases is participation and support of key stakeholders.

#### **2.4.7.5 Established facts about evaluation**

Evaluation frameworks, which other writers refer to as logic models, results framework, and programme theory or programme logic are fundamental to any evaluation. Khadar (2003) defines them as the description of that overall plan, the context and the underlying theory or philosophy for the different evaluation actions. Khadar also presents another definition that suggests that evaluation frameworks with clearly defined questions form the basis of the enquiry.

Core to the evaluation framework is indicators, Khadar categorize them as follows: performance indicators relating to inputs to outcomes, effectiveness indicators defined as those that relate to outputs, cost-effectiveness indicators are those that relate inputs to outcomes, and lastly affect indicators, which are those that relate to usage to outcomes.

#### **2.4.7.6 Key issues and debates in evaluation**

According to White (2010), one of the debates and issues around evaluation relate to approaches to evaluation. The debates present two definitions of impact evaluation. White argues that the two definitions are neither right nor wrong as they refer to completely different things. White argues that the debates are nothing but semantics related.

White (2010) points out another debate that relates to the promotion of quantitative methods versus qualitative methods. This is the same debate discussed in debates and issues on monitoring and evaluation, and it is unnecessary.

The other debate relates to types of evaluation. Khadar (2003) argues for two types of evaluation: performance evaluation and impact evaluation. Meanwhile, earlier in the discussion of the components of evaluation, Gorgens & Kusek (2000) argued for five types of evaluation. According to Khadar, these debates will carry on however practice suggests that there is bound to be overlaps. It is adequate that practitioners are aware of the debates but rather focus on adopting simplified definitions of evaluation.

## **2.5 Key attributes for assessing programme implementation**

In this sub section, we discuss the key attributes in assessing programme implementation. In the discussion, we present how they are interlinked and finally how these attributes assisted us in responding to our research questions as an attempt to fulfil the purpose of the research and finally addressing the research problem.

In previous sub section 2.4.7.3, we discussed various components of evaluation in that we mentioned five of them. For purposes of this research study, we utilized key elements of an implementation/process evaluation to identify our research attributes. Implementation or call it process evaluation focuses on programme implementation details. In essence, its emphasis is on the study of the implementation processes (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Another interesting view on implementation evaluation articulated by Brousselle (2004) who refers to it as an implementation analysis or an effort of understanding the dynamic of implementation. Champagne & Denis (1990, p.151) in Brousselle (2004) further suggest that implementation evaluation is “based on three elements, that is (i) the analysis of influences of contextual factors on the degree of implementation of interventions; (ii) the analysis effects of variations in implementation on the programme efficiency; and (iii) interaction between the implementation context and the intervention on observed effect.”

Meanwhile, Durlak & DuPre (2008); Tolma, Cheney, Troup & Hann (2009); and Aarestrup, Jorgensen, Due & Krolner (2014) present the aspect of implementation as presented and discussed hereunder as attributes for our study.

### **2.5.1 Context of implementation**

This aspect of implementation analysis entails social, political and economic environment that may affect implementation of programmes. According to Aarestrup et al (2014), these contextual factors include but not limited to economic and physical resources, facilities where the programme takes place, policies supporting implementation of the programme and most importantly the organizational climate. They further suggest that contextual/environmental factors not well understood and managed may have a negative effect on implementation, which can lead to non-achievement of intended programme outcomes. Contextual factors are very well intertwined with the programme's success and sustenance, and therefore critical for them to be managed or controlled in order to enhance programme chances of a positive impact. According to Fixsen et al, 2005, these include external factors at regional and community levels such as service delivery structures, local service planning and socio-political factors.

### **2.5.2 Fidelity of the intervention:**

This aspect is described as an extent to which implementation of the programme corresponds with the original programme design and planning. They are critical activities outlined in the programme implementation plan without which the programme will not achieve its intended objectives. Fidelity put in other words is adherence, compliance, integrity and faithful replication of the programme plans. Normally, implementation guidelines, procedure manuals and/or standard operating procedures or programmes process flows should clearly outline these critical programme activities. According to Tolma et al (2009), measurement of fidelity is through programme flow analysis, taking stock of critical activities from beginning to the end, and the strength of implementation. Inability to ensure that implementation takes place as planned may lead to incorrect conclusions made on whether the programme has met its outcomes or not. Conclusion also drawn to the effect that a programme has failed to achieve its intended outcomes only to later realise that the issue was not necessarily with programme but the manner in which the programme was executed.

### **2.5.3 Dose delivered and dose received or dosage**

This aspect of implementation is referred to by Durpak & DuPre (2008), as the amount or quantity and strength at which the original programme or intervention was delivered and the extent to which the beneficiaries actively engaged or interacted with the intervention. It assesses the extent of participation of the targeted beneficiaries (Tolma et al, 2009).

#### **2.5.4 Reach**

This aspect of implementation is the proportion of targeted beneficiaries that participated in the programme or intervention and measured through attendance and analysing the characteristic of the target audience. Using the example in the study conducted by Aarestrup (2014), which describes it as the proportion of students and parents from various population sub groups who received the intervention evaluated.

#### **2.5.5 Implementation**

It is of interest to note that according to Tolma et al (2009) and some implementation evaluation researchers combine reach, dosage and fidelity into one variable referred to as implementation. However, others suggest implementation as a variable separate from the abovementioned variables. It is a composite measure depicting the extent of programme implementation and received by the targeted audience (Tolma et al, 2009). Implementation entails “specified set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or a program of known dimensions.” (Fixsen et al, 2005). They further postulate that based on this definition, it therefor suggest that implementation processes must be purposeful and be clearly described in detail to allow for an independent observation to determine presence and strength of these activities.

#### **2.5.6 Recruitment of beneficiaries:**

This aspect refers to the interrogation of procedures followed or utilized to approach and attract beneficiaries of programmes. It is important to be aware that recruitment happens at varying levels and these are individual, organizational and community (Tolma et al, 2009). This aspect also requires careful consideration and control as it influences the nature of programme participants against the target population of the programme.

### **2.5.7 Barriers to implementation:**

These are problems encountered throughout the implementation process especially in relation to reaching out participants of the programmes and others (Tolma et al, 2009).

We are of the opinion that the aforementioned attributes or variables are critical for our study, as they provide adequate information for us to interrogate implementation of skills development in the sector. We sourced information and data relating to these research attributes through engagement with SETA programme managers, SETA provincial managers, and project leaders through one-on-one and group interviews. Awareness and understanding of these are necessary for improving planning for future programme implementation. It also answers to concerns raised in the research problem and has assisted in providing comprehensive responses to our research questions.

## **2.6 Explanatory frameworks for assessing programme implementation**

This section presents a number of explanatory frameworks used in similar past studies that have evaluated implementation of programmes or interventions. We identified these through literature search using key words related to programme implementation, process evaluation, implementation analysis, implementation management etc. In presenting each framework, we will first describe its development, purpose and summarize what it posits. The following are some of the commonly referenced explanatory frameworks in literature.

### **2.6.1 The results framework**

The World Bank (2012) describes the results framework as a tool for development practitioners to articulate programme strategic objectives and an attempt to link these to programmes' intermediate outcomes and results that directly relate to the objectives. This chain of expected results is in a graphic display, matrix, or summary. These results are long-term objectives that are often referred to as outcomes and impacts, and intermediate objectives are referred to outcomes and outputs that come first, and lead to the long-term results/objectives.

Similar tools used in the development practice are logical frameworks, logic models, theories of change, results chain or outcomes mapping. The interesting part about the results framework is that it articulates both the logical chain and the expected cause-effect relationships amongst inputs, outputs, intermediate results or outcomes, and impacts. Articulation of the cause-effect linkages lays the groundwork of the results framework and thus requires intensive clarity of the theory of change (World Bank, 2012).

The proponents of the results framework further postulate that the outcomes and impacts are the focus of the framework as opposed to implementation processes that focus on inputs, activities and outputs. Detailed monitoring plans need to be in place to support the results framework in order to check progress towards achievement of these objectives at varying intervals or times. Underpinning the framework is the underlying critical assumptions that must be always in place to ensure successful implementation of the programme (World Bank, 2012).

The World Bank further states that critical to monitoring and evaluation is a well-constructed results framework that:

- (i) helps to focus energies on outcomes,
- (ii) It articulates important linkages in the theory of change underpinning the programme,
- (iii) helps in developing an evidence-based approach to M&E,
- (iv) assists in measuring progress towards achievements of strategic objectives, and
- (v) Finally, helps in ensuring that objectives are met (World Bank, 2012).

The World Bank also emphasizes that the development of the results framework is a stakeholder-driven process that requires proper planning, consensus, coordination, and ownership, management, communication, reporting, and evaluation.

While the World Bank propagates its use, it acknowledges that it has its own challenges. It advises that practitioners need to be aware upfront of these challenges and plan for them. The Bank challenges entail too much investment in time and resources required from the onset, the effects of the interventions are sometimes difficult to measure fully; the framework can be overly complex that the involvement of programme staff in the evaluation process could lead to bias results.

It is also, our opinion that even though it is a good tool, its lack of focus on the inputs and implementation processes poses a disadvantage for day-to-day management and for those conducting process or implementation evaluations.

### **2.6.2 Programme Theory Model**

Weis (1972) in Chen (1990) postulate that programmes theory model entails three basic elements that enhance the utilization of evaluation results. These elements are (1) the theoretical foundation of a programme or intervention, (2) articulation of the programme process or linkages between inputs and programme outcomes, and (3) programme components and possible approaches that require improvement to enhance programme effectiveness.

Chen (1990) supports the above-mentioned assertion by postulating that future advancements of programme evaluation need a conceptual and theoretical effort to incorporate programme theory into evaluation processes. Chen suggests that programme theory provides a guideline for identifying issues most important in an evaluation process. Programme theory is defined “as a specification of what must be done to achieve the desired goals, what other important impacts may be anticipated, and how these goals and impacts would be generated” (Chen, 1990, p.32). Chen continues to suggest that it has to be comprised of two parts: the prescriptive theory, which entails the structure of the programme including inputs, outcomes and implementation processes, and the causative theory, which entails the underlying causal mechanisms that link the relationships between inputs, implementation processes and the outcomes. Funnel (2000) supports the previous assertion by postulating that the programme theory consists of seven components which entail (i) the articulation of a sequenced hierarchy of proximal outcomes, medial outcomes and distal outcomes, (ii) success criteria, (iii) programme success factors, (iv) non-programme related success factors, (v) activities and resources for the programme, (vi) performance indicators, and (vii) sources of data.

The concept has evolved over the years through rigorous debates in the field of programme evaluation such that some researchers refer to it as a theory of actions, others refer to it as a theory of change, other call it programme logic, others suggest it is logical

frameworks, and others refer to it as outcomes hierarchies (Corny et al, 2011). This confirms some of the concerns raised in the earlier discussion of debates in evaluation studies that suggest that there is lack of standardised and common concepts or nomenclature used in the field M&E.

Nonetheless, for this study we used the concept as defined by Chen (1990), Funnel (2000) and Rogers (2008). They describe it as a variety of ways in developing a causal model linking programme inputs and activities to intended outcomes using it to guide evaluation exercises. They however caution evaluation practitioners to be aware of the fact that some of the models articulating the programme theory are linear, simple, and sometimes complex and complicated. We were also particularly inclined to use Weis' articulation of the programme theory to include (1) an analysis of the theoretical foundation of a programme or intervention, (2) articulation of the programme process or linkages between inputs and programme outcomes, and (3) an analysis of programme components.

### **2.6.3 Theories of Change**

According to Blamey and Mackenzie (2007), Theories of Change emerged with the realization within the evaluation practice that experimentalist approaches to programme evaluation have had disappointing results and inconclusive findings in many of their attempts in evaluation. This realization served as an acknowledgement that people are not passive beneficiaries of opportunities, and context is critical in understanding the interplay between a programme and its effects. Various proponents of the Theories of Change further postulate that impact of social programmes cannot be for sure determined with any level of confidence without the acknowledgement of context within which programmes are implemented (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007).

Earlier in our discussion of the Programme Theory, we alluded to a fact that the practice of evaluation is challenged with inconsistencies in the use of terminology, theories of change is one of the concepts described in varied ways by different authors. As an example, Blamey and Mackenzie describe it as a hypothesized links between the programmes' activities and its anticipated outcomes. Weis (1995) on the other hand refers to it as an implementation theory, which is required to translate programme objectives



into on-going service delivery and programme operations. While Chen (1990) refers to these hypothesized linkages as prescriptive theory within the programme theory. For purposes of this research report, we will not engage in any of the debate about the concepts except to appreciate what is good for our study within each of the varying definitions.

We will proceed with Blamey' and Mackenzie' description, which, in essence postulate that theories of change are largely concerned with understanding the theory underpinning the programme. They postulate further that the theories of change recognize the importance of both programme implementation theory and prescriptive theory.

Theories of Change are also concerned with the types of activities; programme timelines, outcomes or what Blamey and Mackenzie refer to as threshold of change, which outlines the details of an intervention. Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) suggest that once the programme has been mapped, practitioners should attempt to unveil the rationale for the design and then establish its plausibility, do-ability and testability of the hypothesized links between activities and outcomes expressed as knowledge gained, attitudes and behaviours of individuals or groups. However, Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) acknowledge that there is scarcity of published examples or cases that have used these approaches.

From the definitions and descriptions above, we are of the view that programme theory model and theories of change have more commonalities rather than differences. Both are relevant for an implementation analysis exercise.

#### **2.6.4 Ecological Framework for understanding effective implementation**

Durlak and DuPre (2008) developed the Ecological Framework for effective implementation as an adaptation from the Interactive Systems Framework (ISF) developed by Wanderman et al in 2008. The framework presents five core elements related to effective programme implementation and these are: (i) the characteristic or nature of the intervention/innovation, (ii) characteristics of service providers involved in the implementation of the intervention, (iii) the community or environmental or contextual factors, (iv) the organizational capacity, and (v) training and technical assistance.

The organizational capacity, which entails (i) the type of organisational structure, required to, or responsible for guiding the implementation of a programme, and (ii) the training and technical support for the organizational capacity this involves the skills, the knowhow and attitude are at the core of effective implementation of an innovation (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). They further state that while these two key elements are at the core, they also interdependent on the surrounding ecological context such as:

- (i) the characteristics of the programme as encapsulated in its programme theory – i.e. its purpose, the underlying theories (prescriptive or causative), its objectives, strategies, and expected outcomes and impacts;
- (ii) the characteristics of the service providers or training providers or delivery partners or implementers in relation to self-efficacy, skills proficiency and understanding of the potential benefits of the intervention or programme; and
- (iii) the surrounding community or environmental factors such a politics, policies, funding and administrative and financial infrastructure.

Essentially, the framework mainly hypothesizes that the variables present in these five key interrelating elements outlined above continuously influence successful implementation of any programme (Durlak and DuPre, 2008). We note similarities in the variables present in the five key elements presented above with some of attributes for measuring implementation processes analysis discussed earlier in sub-section 2.5 of this report.

### **2.6.5 The Quality Implementation Framework**

The quality implementation framework (QIF) was developed by Meyers, Durlak and Wandersman (2012) from their review and synthesis of twenty-five other implementation framework including Wandersman et al' Interactive Systems Framework for Dissemination and Implementation (ISF) of which the abovementioned Ecological Framework for Implementation is derived from.

This framework identifies fourteen critical steps in the implementation process together with specific actions required in each of the steps in order to achieve quality implementation. Meyers, Durlak and Wandersman define quality implementation as putting a programme, an intervention, or an innovation into practice in the manner that

meets the set standard to achieve programme outcomes. This definition is consistent with other definitions of implementation that we presented earlier when we discussed research attributes. Interestingly they point out that implementation is not an all-or-one concept but exist in some degree.

According to Meyers, Durlak and Wandersman (2012) the fourteen distinct steps, which follow logically into four temporal phases namely:

- (i) initial considerations of the host setting which entails assessment strategies, decisions relating to adaptation, and capacity building-strategies;
- (ii) creating a structure for implementation, which entails structural features for implementation;
- (iii) on-going structure once implementation begins which entails on-going implementation support strategies these include technical assistance, process evaluation, supportive feedback mechanism; and
- (iv) improving future applications and that entails learning from experiences.

To sum up, the framework hypothesizes that quality implementation can be conceptually viewed in systematic; four phase sequence that entails a number of steps. It suggests that most of these steps must take place prior implementation commences and that quality implementation can be best achieved through a combination of multiple action that include assessment, negotiation and collaboration, organised planning and structuring; and reflection and critical analysis (Meyers, Durlak and Wandersman, 2012).

In conclusion, the discussion above of the various explanatory or theoretical frameworks, we note more commonalities and similar intentions rather than differences. We therefore accept them in equal terms as viable frameworks necessary any research study including this one, of course depending on the preference of the evaluation practitioner and the research questions at hand.

## **2.7 Towards a conceptual framework for assessing implementation of skills development programmes**

This section presents a conceptual framework used to guide this research study. In presenting the conceptual framework, we will first summarise the intended outputs,

outcomes and the impacts of the youth development programme in the ETD sector. We will briefly summarise some of the research studies that have attempted to assess implementation of skills development programme in the past with the express view of identifying possible limitations within those. We will again briefly summarise the key attributes of our research. Based on a thorough reflection of the issues, we will then present our research conceptual framework.

### **2.7.1 An overview of implementation of programmes in the Sector**

The ETDPSETA in line with its five-year sector skills plan and its five-year strategic plan, facilitates and implements various skills development programmes for the employees in the ETD sector and unemployed youth in the country in various forms as prescribed in the Skill Development Act of 1998 as amended in 2008.

The learning programmes include learnerships, short skills programmes, workplace experiential learning for student and graduate internships. The SETA also funds and supports a number of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in various higher education institutions in the country. It is imperative to highlight that most of these of programmes are in line with relevant qualifications or unit standards registered on the national qualifications framework (NQF). They may be a few that are not necessarily in line with registered unit standards.

The SETA support all of these initiatives to ensure that ultimately the ETD sector has a pool of high or intermediate skills and capable workforce to improve its productivity and performance. The intended outcomes of these interventions, both proximal and distal are to ensure that young people in this country are skilled and adequately prepared for employability or ready to enter the labour market. In addition, they are to ensure that there is increased graduate output in various higher education and technical and vocational training institutions. The long-term outcomes or impacts are to reduce the levels of unemployment in the country, alleviate poverty and to increase productivity in workplaces in order stimulate the country's economic growth and global competitiveness.

As already mentioned earlier in the in-depth discussion of the research problem statement in section 1, there is a substantive number of individuals or groups that have criticized the

value add of these programmes suggesting that there is no visible impact. There has been criticism of the skills system and the work done by the SETAs including the ETDPSSETA. There are quarters that are suggesting an overhaul of the SETA system and others suggesting an extensive configuration. These concerns emanate from various quarters including some of the employers who are the benefactors from the SETA programmes mainly because they question the whole conceptualisation and implementation of these skills development programmes in various sectors.

### **2.7.2 Past research on implementation of skills development programmes**

As already indicated in sub-section 2.3, there have not been adequate empirical evaluation studies conducted on skills development programmes implemented by the ETDPSSETA or in ETD sector. There is however a few consultants' reports (grey literature) that have attempted to review similar interventions. The example of one such study was that commissioned by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC). This particular study was part of an impact assessment of the National Skills Development Strategy II. Their mandate was to assess the impact of learnerships and apprenticeships implemented by various SETAs during the implementation of the NSDS II. The research design of the study was to answer the three research questions: (i) what numbers and levels of skills does the learnerships pathway system produce? (ii) what are the different trajectories in the transition to employment? (iii) how does the learnerships pathway system build the kinds of skills and capabilities that enhance employment?

The study used multi research methods to collect its data including surveys, population trends, and interviews. The case studies used did not include learnerships implemented by the ETDPSSETA therefore; the results cannot not be generalizable to the ETD sector and/or other sectors that were not part of the target population. It is thus our view that there were limitations related to the study. Besides the issues related to generalization, the study focussed on the assessment of impact without interrogating how these learnerships were implemented, which typifies a Type III error or what the evaluation practice refers to as the 'black box' evaluation.

The other two related studies were the one recently commissioned by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) to review the current skills development system

and the other one commissioned by the Ministry of Higher Education and Training to review the performance of the 21 SETAs, which included the ETDPSSETA. The interrogation of both the reports indicates weakness in research methodologies and both lacked theoretical underpinnings in their interpretation of findings. Both reviews were commissioned to consultants and do not typify empirical research studies.

The empirical studies that we reviewed in sub-section 2.3 were mainly in other business sectors and not necessarily education training and development sectors. They focussed on other social interventions not related to skills development interventions. These studies focused on other countries outside South Africa. Much as the focus of these studies were on analysing implementation including factors affecting implementation, they did not focus on the ETD sector or were they looking at other sectors within S.A. Some lacked the theoretical frameworks for interpretation of their findings.

This study is not attempt to address all the limitations identified in the above-mentioned studies, it is however a start of building a repository of information for the ETD sector and the ETDPSSETA as the unit of analysis. This begins to build a repository information for impact evaluation studies in the future.

### **2.7.3 Key attributes and variables**

We collected data on the following attributes using the interview schedule attached hereto as appendix 1.1:

- a) Context of implementation entails various aspects of the social, political and economic environment that may affect implementation of programmes. According to Aarestrup et al (2014) these contextual factors include but not limited to economic and physical resources, facilities where the programme takes place, policies supporting implementation of the programme and most importantly the organizational climate.
- b) Fidelity of the intervention is described as an extent to which implementation of the programme corresponds with the original programme design and planning (programme theory or theory of change). It is critical activities that are outlined in the programme plan without which the programme will not achieve its objectives. It is

sometime referred as adherence, compliance, integrity and faithful replication. Normally, these critical activities are documented in implementation guidelines or procedure manuals or standard operating procedures or programmes process flows. Inability to ensure that implementation takes place as planned may lead to incorrect conclusions being made on whether the programme has met its outcomes or not.

- c) Implementation according to Tolma et al (2009) combines reach, dosage and fidelity into one variable referred to as implementation. Tolma et al however describe it as a composite measure that depicts the extent to which the programme has been implemented and received by the targeted audience.
- d) Recruitment of beneficiaries refers to the interrogation of procedures that are followed or utilized to approach and attract beneficiaries of programmes. It is important to be aware that recruitment happens at varying levels and these are individual, organizational and community (Tolma et al, 2009). It is precisely why that recruitment requires close monitoring to ensure that it is in line with programme design.
- e) Barriers to implementation are usually described as problems that are encountered throughout the implementation process especially in relation to reaching out participants of the programmes and others (Tolma et al, 2009). Awareness and understanding of these barriers are necessary for improving planning for future programme implementation. This responds to concerns around why beneficiaries stop participating in programmes and also why certain employers in the sector are not willing to participate in these programmes. Ability to counteract these challenges or barriers in advance assumes that participants or programme beneficiaries will remain in the programme and better the chances of the programme achieving its outcome and impact.

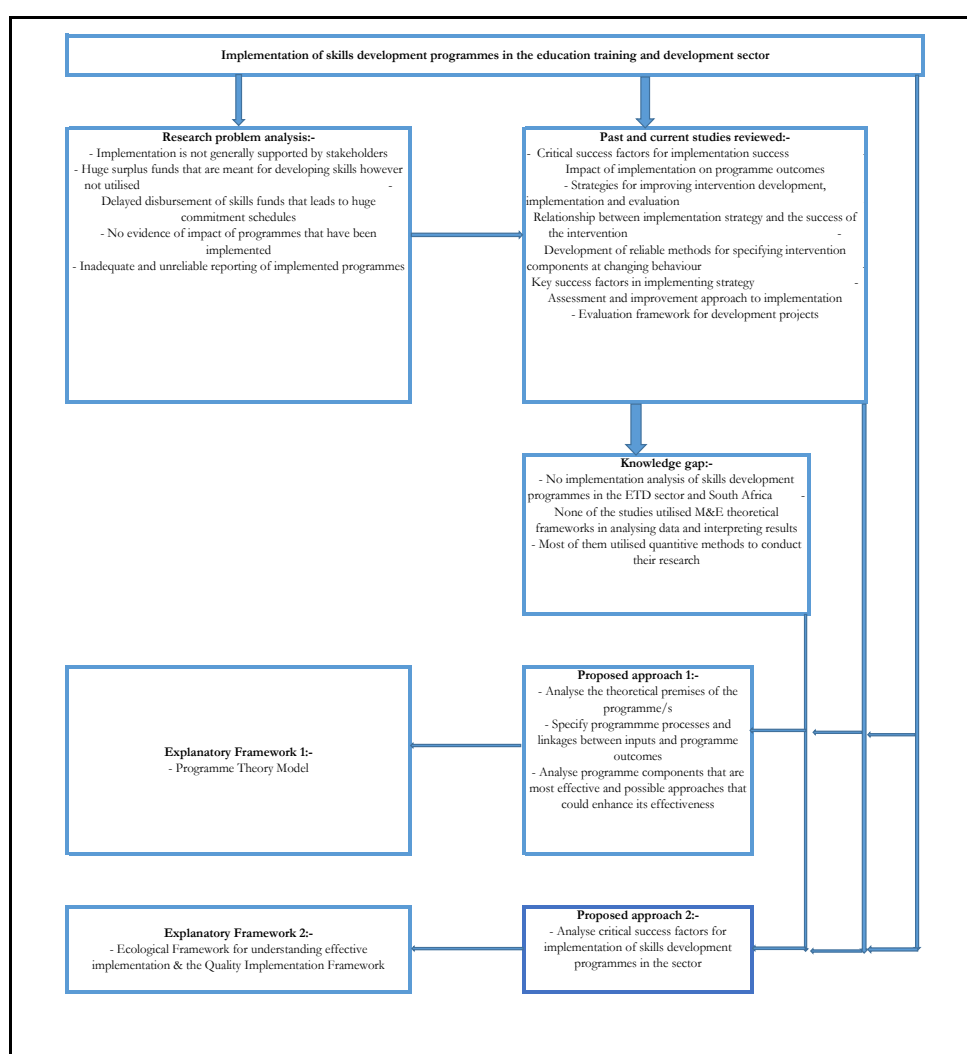
#### **2.7.4 Theoretical frameworks for interpreting the findings**

In order for us to be able to respond to our research questions as presented in sub-section 1.2 and to interpret the findings thereof, a combination of theoretical frameworks were utilized and these are discussed in-depth in the previous sub-section 2.6.

### 2.7.5 A conceptual framework

The diagram hereunder summarises the conceptual framework that we used for assessing implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector. We derived it from a thorough reflection on the issues raised throughout from section 2.1 to 2.6.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for assessing implementation of skills development programmes



Guided by the conceptual framework, it was critical that we commence the study with the initial stage of unpacking and/or clearly describing the specific skills development programme we used to assess its implementation. We agreed with the project advisory



team that we focus on the youth development programme as outlined in the ETDP SETA five-year strategic plan. The researcher led this process who closely working together with various key programme stakeholders within the ETDPSETA. According to Ton (2012), this process improves the rigour in any study. It resulted in much more refined research questions. It also helped in clarifying and generating information on fundamental assumptions about the manner in which activities translate into the desired outcomes. It involved interrogating the programme theory or a theory of change or logic model or result chain of the SETA Youth Development Programme so that we understood its purposes, the underlying theories, strategies, and expected outcomes and impacts.

The next stage entailed a detailed description of acceptable and approved delivery mechanisms of the programme including its basic components, theory, and its elements as expressed in the logic model or results chain framework of the ETDPSETA. We further unpacked delivery structures of the ETDPSETA in order to identify individuals or groups or partnerships involved in the implementation of programmes. Weis (1998), refers to this phase as examining programme processes by asking critical questions such as: how they carried out the programme? How the programme operates, for whom and with what resources? This includes understanding the characteristics of the staff delivering the programme, the frequency of the services, the duration of programme, the beneficiaries, how these beneficiaries responded to the programme etc.

The two stages described above led to the third iterative stage suggested by Saunders, Evans and Joshi (2005), which entailed reviewing the research questions, reviewing our research methods; and then we interrogated the programme resources, context and characteristics. This also involved developing measurable and realistic programme process objectives for measurement including selecting and agreeing on measurement tools to assess them and the evaluation questions. This was a process driven by an elaborate process of engaging with stakeholders within the ETDP SETA and document analysis.

On concluding the above iterative process, we moved to the fourth stage, which involved the development of a comprehensive implementation evaluation plan that captured key activities, timelines, types of data sources and reporting accountabilities. The plan clearly showed measures, how to evaluate them and who will provide the information. This exercise led and driven by the researcher supported by the advisory team members.

The final and fifth stage involved analysis of data and going back to check preliminary findings with stakeholders in a practical and user-friendly manner until we finalised the report.

### **3. Research techniques, procedures and methods**

This chapter discusses the research techniques, procedures and methods that we utilised in executing our research plan. It begins with providing a brief description of a research strategy, and commits to one in section 3.1. It proceeds to section 3.2 to provide description of the research design and again commits to one that we used for this study. In section 3.3, we discuss the research procedures and methods in-depth; these include the description of the data collection instrument, the description of the research target population and sampling, ethical issues considered during data collection, data management and storage processes, the actual data processing and analysis and we end this section with the description of the respondents. In section 3.4, we discuss reliability and validity of measures, and ultimately close off the chapter with section 3.5 presenting limitations of our study.

#### **3.1 Research Strategy**

According Bryman (2012) there are three generally accepted types of research strategies in social research known as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Bryman suggests that quantitative and qualitative methods carry fundamental difference in respect to the role of theory, epistemology and ontological concerns. While these differences are fundamental, Bryman (2012) further argues that they are not a hard and fast one as until recently, there is growing indication that each strategy has broad characteristics of another. This argument presents the mixed-methods strategy, which is widely referred to a combination of methods associated with quantitative and qualitative research methods. In addition to that, Neuman (2011) also argues that while propagators of either quantitative or qualitative research methods see them as different from one another, they are in fact complementing each other. He argues that, researchers who criticize qualitative research based on quantitative research standards are often later disappointed, and vice versa. He suggests that it is best to acknowledge strengths that each strategy offers in its own merits.

Yang (2007) describes quantitative strategies as those methods that attempt to demonstrate a possible relationship between designs and outcomes and whether these relationships can be generalised to other similar settings. In a public policy context, these

methods use techniques such as modelling, quantification of inputs and outputs, descriptive statistics, statistical inferences, operations research, cost and risk benefit analysis. Sadovnik (2007) on the other hand describes qualitative research strategies as those that are inclined to use natural settings in order to understand the social world by using observational, communicative and documentary methods. Sadovnik argues that in a public policy context, qualitative methods can also be part of a mixed method approach to research.

For this research study, we opted for a qualitative research strategy precisely because of the nature of the phenomenon we are investigating, which entails analysis of experiences as described and explained by the research participants within their own space. The researcher was the key driver in the strategy and data collection, which serves a critical element for a qualitative research study.

According to Baxter and Jack (2008), qualitative research strategies facilitate in-depth exploration of the phenomenon within its context utilising various data sources. This is necessary as it provides different perspectives on a phenomenon under study and that is very critical for understanding the essence of the phenomenon, in our case it is the implementation of skills development, a phenomenon under study. It is precisely why this study took a qualitative strategy. It is of utmost importance that for us to respond to our research questions, it becomes critical to understand in-depth the implementation of skills development in the ETD sector in order to advise on how to institutionalise improvements. We used what Neuman (2011, p. 151) refers to as logic in practice, which is “relatively messy, with ambiguity, tied to a specific case and oriented toward the practical completion of a task”. Rather than following a logical linear systematic process, this research took a nonlinear research path, which was cyclical, iterative, and took a back and forth pattern.

### **3.2 Research design**

According to Bryman (2012) and Wagner, Kawulich, and Garner (2012) research designs provide a framework or a blueprint for the research process that informs collecting and analysing data. Bryman suggests that a choice of a particular design reflects a researcher's decisions on priority given on various dimensions of the research process e.g. causality

and generalization. While Wagner et al argue that it important for the researcher to ensure coherence in the design of a research by ensuring a logical argument of the research process from the topic, to the research question, to methodology and the methods. Commonly proposed research designs by the abovementioned authors are quasi-experimental, experimental, comparative, ethnography, case study, cross sectional, action research and longitudinal research designs. For the purpose of this research, we used a case study research design. It is our view that this was the most appropriate research design for a qualitative research strategy and for addressing the purpose of this study, which intended to explore and describe the implementation of skills development within the naturalistic context of the case without generalising the findings.

Baxter and Jack (2008, p.544) contend that this research design “allows for researchers to explore individuals or organisations, simply through complex interventions, relations, communities, or programs”. This responded perfectly well to the purpose of this study, which was to assess in depth processes of implementing skills development programmes in the ETD sector using ETDPSETA as a case.

Bryman (2012) defines a case study research design as that which involves a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case, which could be an individual or organisation or relation or a process. He further postulates that sometimes the case study design can extend to include a study of two or three cases for mere purposes of comparisons. Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that a case study design facilitates examination of a phenomenon in its contextual environments using various data sources, which allow for a multiple view of a phenomenon under study. They further argue that the design serves as a valuable approach that provides tools to study complex phenomenon within their contexts. It helps mostly in studies that focus in areas of evaluation and/or developing programmes (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It is precisely for this argument posited by Baxter and Jack that we chose this research design, as our intention was thoroughly interrogate implementation of skills development in the ETD sector as a complex phenomenon within the context of the ETDPSETA in order to recommend practical and plausible areas of improvements with maximum buy-in from the stakeholders.

Baxter and Jack (2008) continue to present various types of case study designs and argue that the research questions will usually inform the researchers’ choice of one. The

following are the types case studies: (i) explanatory case study, that which seeks to explain a presumed causal links in development interventions i.e. the actual programme with programme outcomes; (ii) an exploratory case study, the type which explores situations in which development intervention evaluated have no clear or single set of outcomes; (iii) a descriptive case study that which is used to describe an intervention or a particular phenomenon in its real context; (iv) multiple/collective case studies are those that enable a researcher to explore differences in between cases; (v) instrumental cases are usually playing a secondary and a supportive role in order to facilitate understanding of something else; and lastly (vi) an intrinsic case study whereby a researcher has a genuine interest in the case and it holds a particular ordinariness. For the purpose of our study, we chose a descriptive case study design as the most preferable for this research study because our ultimate intention was to describe in detail processes of programme implementation in order to able to determine areas of strength and/or areas of weakness.

A study on the performance impact of intra-firm organizational design on an alliance' NDP projects conducted by Badir, Buchel and Tucci (2012) exemplify a case study research. The study investigates the impact of internal organizational design of a central firm on the communication and performance of an alliance' Network lead company (NPD) projects. The study selected participating three companies based on the same criteria. The case study analysis entailed semi-structured one-on-one interviews with top project managers, results of which were analysed and compared with archived ones. A second round of interviews followed with groups of team members for further clarification and collection of more data. This case study research typified what Baxter and Jack (2008) described as multiple/collective case studies.

Another study using a multiple case study was that conducted by Sun, Ni and Lan (2015). This study expanded on the four critical success factors for implementation of enterprise resource planning. Sun et al (2015) examined eighty 80 critical success factors for implementation. In the study, they presented a systematic assessment and improvement approach to implementation and used three companies in China as cases. The main object of the study as articulated in Sun et al (2015, p.41) was "to develop and validate a practical approach for assessing and improving critical success factors for performance during implementation in Chinese companies". They took eighty critical success factors (CSFs) and divided them into five stages of implementation by linking CSFs to each stage,

assessed the performance of each stage, and included continuous improvement within each of the performance of the stage. The following are stages identified: (i) organisational readiness, (ii) selection, (iii) implementation, and (iv) the final preparation and live-run (Sun et al, 2015)

An impact assessment of the national skills development strategy (NSDS) II conducted by Kruss et al (2012) is another exemplar of a case study. They used three data collection methods to respond to three research questions. They used three cases (multiple case studies): Health and Welfare SETA, Manufacturing SETA and Financial Services SETA to respond to the third question. They conducted interviews with various stakeholders in the three SETAs and further analysed SETA documents and related data. The main purpose of the study was to assess the impact of learnerships and apprenticeships implemented during the NSDS II.

The limitations in the case studies are that its findings may not be generalised to other contexts.

### **3.3 Research procedure and methods**

In this section, we present an in-depth discussion of our research data collection instrument, the target population and sampling of respondents. We also discuss some ethical issues considered during the research. We continue to discuss data collection procedures; data management and storage related issues, data processing and analysis and end the discussion with a description of research respondents.

#### **3.3.1 Research data collection instrument**

Bryman (2012) describes data collection instruments as tools researchers utilize for gathering of data from a research population sample in order to respond to the research questions presented together with the research problem statement. It is a critical point of any research study and requires careful consideration. Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2014) contend that they tools to collect data specifically in relation to the variables or attributes studied. They must be developed and standardize with careful and considered attention to their validity and reliability of the measurement, that is, do they measure what

they supposed to measure and can they be utilised over and over again in similar contexts to produce the same result? According to Niewenshuis and Smit (2012), there are two types of data collection instruments. The first one called an observation schedule, and the second one called an interview schedule or interview protocol or interview guide. Niewenshuis and Smit present the third technique, which they contend that it is usually applicable in a qualitative research and called document or artefact analyses. Researchers can further sub-divided these instruments into a wide variety of derivatives each with its own unique structure and application possibilities. For the purpose and nature of this research study, we used an interview schedule as the main instrument and further supported it with document analyses.

An interview schedule entails a collection of designed questions asked by the interviewer during an interview session and always used in a structured interview (Bryman, 2012). An interview schedule is usually appropriate for face-to-face interviews, group interviews, telephone interviews or focus group interview. It also involves email-internet interviews. In a qualitative research, these interviews may be unstructured and with open-ended questions that are few in number with the express purpose of eliciting participants views and opinions on the research problem. Participants can provide historical information and the interview schedule allows the researcher to control the line of questioning too (Creswell, 2014). Interviews are helpful and are a valuable source of information as they allow the researcher access to rich descriptive data that allows entry and view into the world of the interviewee. It also allows the researcher to also access and observe non-verbal communication of the research participants. It is also critical that an interview schedule entails a questioning strategy. This is how questions are formulated and put to the participants of the research (Niewenshuis and Smit, 2012).

The nature and purpose of this study is to explain and describe processes and events during the implementation of skills development programmes, it therefore becomes critical that the enquiry needs to have a descriptive and explanatory view of participants' perspectives of issues, which justifies our choice of an interview schedule as a data collection technique.

According to Creswell (2014) and Niewenshuis and Smit (2012) the interview schedule needs to include various components, which form the structure of the data collection



instrument. The basic structure of the interview schedule is to guide the interview session in line with research problem, research questions and information about the research topic emanating from the literature review. It could also include any other information that the researcher deems necessary and useful for the study. Research writers also suggest that the interview guide entails basic elements such as the introduction to the research study, statement on ethical issues of informed consent and permission to record the interview, the main questions and then finishes off with a concluding statement. There are generally three types of interviews: semi-structured, fully structured and unstructured (Niewenshuis and Smit, 2012). For purposes of this study, we used a fully structured questionnaire, which we attached hereto as appendix 1.1

Bryman (2012) further suggests that a structured interview called a standardized interview, which involves administration of an interview schedule by the researcher as an interviewer. Its main aim is to ensure that the interviewed experience the same context of questioning and this is mainly to ensure that the responses to questions easily aggregated. Practice suggest that researchers can reliably do this aggregation in instances where responses follow identical cues. It is also important to note that the interviewer must follow the exact sequence of questioning in line with the schedule. The questions in the guide must be specific and offer the interviewed a fixed range of responses that are referred to as closed, closed-ended, pre-coded or fixed choice. While the questions offer a fixed range of responses, Niewenshuis and Smit (2012) suggest that they must be also open-ended with a limited number of ranking or multiple-choice types of questions. Due to resources constraint both in time and financial, this type of instrument is most practical and affordable. Nonetheless, interviews are the most prominent data collection strategies in any qualitative research study hence we utilized a structured interview guide for our study.

We derived questions in our interview schedule from some of the constructs and concepts that we discussed earlier as attributes in section 2.5 of chapter two, which presents a discussion of the key attributes for this research study. Wholey et al (2012) emphasize the importance of developing and putting quality control measures in place as part of any study. We used the following quality control measures in our study: (i) we pre-tested and piloted the data collection instrument, (ii) discussed and brain-stormed at length definitions of concepts for better clarity, (iii) triangulated findings with more than one

respondent from the original sources, (iv) reviewed sampling plans for any sampling bias, and (v) lastly cleaned and clarified wording in the questionnaire to avoid bias and ambiguity.

As an example, we reviewed a similar study conducted by Hodgson, Papatheodorou and James (2014), which adopted a case study design to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from a multiple sources. Key questions of the study were: (1) what is the effect of the ECD training on trainees. (2) What is the effect of home-based Abahambi ECD programme on children's development outcomes and school readiness? (3) What can LETCEE learn from the evaluation in order to improve its M&E systems and enhance organizational learn? To facilitate responses to the above questions, they administered an interview schedule with open-ended questions among LETCEE staff and Abahambi (Hodgson, Papatheodorou and James, 2014).

Another study conducted by Tolma et al (2009) described the design of the process evaluation of a collaborative effort among community partners in order to address health issues in central Oklahoma – Turning Point community partnership programme. The evaluation team developed and approved the evaluation measurement tools. These comprised of attendance and media logs, interactive group evaluation form, meeting observation form, facilitator check-off list, and steering committee feedback, a random electronic and profile of collaboration survey. The latter two instruments they facilitated through an interview schedule in a form of questionnaire that entailed both open-ended and closed questions and formed part of an interview guide or schedule (Tolma et al, 2009).

A third study that used an interview schedule is study conducted by Deane and Harre (2014). The study provided an example of a program theory-driven evaluation science framework applied to evaluate Project K – a youth development programme. The authors conducted focus group interviews with programme participants. It entailed questions relating to antecedent conditions, the participants profile, the essential programme strategies, the influencing factors and the key outcomes. Where appropriate, the interviewer asked questions that related to the causal links between the phenomena under discussion (Deane and Harre, 2014).

The above studies provided guidance in the development and administration of our data collection instrument.

### **3.3.2 Target population and sampling of respondents**

#### **3.3.2.1 Target population**

A target population sometimes called a research population. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) define a population as the entire group of individuals studied or units of analysis. Bryman 2012 refers to it as the universe of units. It is this universe of units the sample is derived. These units could be in a form of individuals or organisations or a community or a programme etc. (Bryman, 2012).

The target population for this study comprised of hundred and twelve staff members of the ETDPSETA that are directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector. They are categorised as follows: executive and senior management, programme/provincial managers, skills advisors/project leaders, marketing and communications staff, corporate services staff and other operations staff that support programme implementation based at Head Office. Other external role players that are categorised as follows: the training providers that are contracted by the ETDPSETA to conduct training, the constituency employers within ETD sector who are beneficiaries of the programmes of the SETA, employees of the constituency employers who have participated in the training programmes, some of the unemployed youth in various programmes funded by the SETA. This research study' target population focused on the hundred and twelve staff members of the ETDPSETA.

#### **3.3.2.2 Sampling of respondents**

Sampling is a process whereby a researcher selects or chooses a sub-set of the entire population of the study to participate in the study. The researcher carefully chooses this sub-set to represent the characteristics of the total population in the same proportions and relationships (Creswell, 2014). Bryman (2012) concurs with Creswell in defining or describing sampling however further adds that it is an exercise that chooses a segment of

a population by using a specific sampling method/s in doing that and are commonly known as probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Laher and Botha (2012) also introduce the aforementioned two broad types of sampling with each consisting of varied sampling techniques. Probability sampling which is defined as a non-systematic and random therefore each item or element of the population has an equal chance of being selected; and non- probability, in which case, all items in the population do not have an equal chance of being selected, in that case samples are determined by researcher' convenience and judgement (Laher and Botha, 2012).

Both two types of sampling can be in both quantitative and qualitative research studies, depending on the context of the research and available resources. As already indicated earlier, each type of sampling contains specific techniques or methods utilised. In the case of a non-probability sampling, which we used in this study, there are seven techniques namely: convenience, snowball, quota, purposive, maximum, critical case and theoretical sampling (Laher and Botha, 2012). From these, we used both convenience and purposive sampling to identify sampling respondents for this research study.

Bryman (2012) describes purposive sampling, as a form of sampling whereby the researcher chooses to sample cases or participants in a strategic way so that they are relevant and can provide suitable responses to the research questions. According to Laher and Botha (2012), this is the most useful form of sampling within non-probability sampling. Some authors refer to it as judgement sampling. Laher and Botha continue to posit that in this instance the researcher uses his or her experience in the area of study, or previous research experience or ingenuity to identify participants in the study. The researcher does this so that the chosen respondents are representative of the target population and using specific criteria to identify these individuals.

On other hand, convenience sampling is whereby the researcher uses whoever is readily available to participate in the study. Other writers refer to it as accidental or haphazard sampling. It is the most expedient and practical form of sampling especially where there are time and budgetary constraints. The shortcoming of this form of sampling is that participants may not be representative of the entire population (Laher and Botha, 2012). It is however our view that this shortcoming can be managed and controlled by the

researcher who ensures that those who volunteer are to a large extent representative of the entire target population.

It is for the aforementioned reasoning and definitions that we used both purposive and convenience sampling so that, in instances where those that identified through a purposive process were not available or not willing to participate in the study, the second option of convenience sampling is used. We did this also because of the nature of the study, which was mainly to fulfil course requirements and the fact that there were budgetary and time constraints.

The main criteria we used for both sampling methods was that research participants are from the following categories of the ETDPSSETA staff: (i) senior management, (ii) programme managers, and (iii) project leaders. All these categories are directly involved in programme planning and implementation and would have participated in implementation of a programme for at a minimum of one year.

### **3.3.3 Ethical considerations**

Bryman (2012), Ogletree and Kawulich (2012), and Creswell (2014) all agree that ethical issues need to be anticipated and carefully considered throughout the process of research from the design to its implementation through to the final report write up. In view of the fact that the nature of research involves participants or individuals that respond to research questions and therefore require protection from any physical and emotional harm that may emanate from the research. This includes protection of data gathered from research participants. All three authors agree in particular on specific ethical issues that need careful consideration such as acquiring informed consent from research participants, avoiding deception, assuring participants of confidentiality of information, avoidance of any harm towards participants and recognition of gate keeping tendencies (Ogletree and Kawulich, 2012).

For purposes of this research study, we made sure that there was no deception of any kind in conducting this study. Upfront, the researcher declared her interest in conducting the study, which is purely for meeting academic requirements and that there, was no

funding from anyone whatsoever. Attached hereto as appendix 1.2 is a short profile of the researcher.

Subsequent to defending the research proposal to the University Proposal Defence Committee, we sought a letter from WITS School of Governance that confirmed approval of the research topic and the research proposal. We further on sought permission to conduct the research study on the operations of the ETDPSETA as a case study from the Chief Executive Officer in line with Human Resources Policies of the ETDPSETA.

The researcher reassured all research participants' protection from any harm that could arise from their involvement in the study by keeping all information received from them through interviews confidential and not used to compromise them in any way. Researcher emphasized that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn from the study at any given point of the research. Participants signed consent forms made available for them. In the consent form, the researcher outlined interview procedures, which included recording of the interview and sought permission to record. We have hereto attached a copy of the consent form as appendix 1.3

#### **3.3.4 Data collection and storage**

According to Wholey et al (2012), researchers need to be consciously aware that choice of data collection approach is politically and bureaucratically cumbersome including mundane problems such as compatibility of electronic devices and computer systems; and hence it requires careful planning and consideration. Wholey et al further suggest eight data collection methods that cover both quantitative and qualitative approaches and these are agency records and/or documents analysis, systematic surveys, trained observer methods, fieldwork, internet, fully or semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and stories. They further indicate that researchers must be encouraged to utilize several of these in order to strengthen their research rigour.

For purposes of this research study, we commenced data collection with seeking permission to conduct the study from the CEO of the ETDPSETA. We established four members advisory team comprised of staff members who volunteered their participation

in the team due to their personal interest in the findings of the study. We used to pre-test the data collection instrument as already indicated in the discussion of the data collection instrument above. Wholey et al (2012) support the approach as they suggest that such groups are helpful to bounce off ideas and inputs through the research process.

We proceeded to conduct an analysis of organisational documents; these documents included the ETDPSSETA SSP, the ETDPSSETA five-year strategic plan, which outlined the results chain framework for each of the programmes, the current and previous years' organisational annual performance plans and previous years' annual reports. We also analysed other documents published by the DHET including the National Skills Development Strategy 111. Information from documents analysis exercise assisted us to understand certain contextual or environmental issues necessary for us to be able establish rapport with our research respondents. As already indicated earlier, we pre-tested the interview schedule with some of the staff members, which led to us reviewing the questions about three times until we finalised the instrument.

We thereafter commenced with scheduling appointments with the sampled research respondents. This was the most difficult part of the research study as some of important participants were not available to participate, some would agree to an appointment however cancel at a later stage. To maximize the utilization of interviews, we made these appointments in advance to draw-up a schedule for all the sessions. The interviews were scheduled and conducted in the participants' offices, which required a lot of travelling for the researcher. A few were conducted in the researcher' office in Johannesburg. The maximum time spent on each interview was an hour and fifteen minutes.

On day of the interview sessions, we took participants through the consent form in order to secure their consent of participation. The content form introduced the researcher, outlined the purpose of the study and its benefits, it clarified how we identified respondents, clarified issues of privacy and voluntary participation, and took them through the interview procedures, which entailed recording the interview.

During the interviews, we sought permission to use an electronic recording devise and manual note taking. We conducted just about ten one-on-one and one-group interviews with Programme Managers, Project Leaders and representative of senior management.

We conducted interviews in comfortable office spaces with minimal interruptions. Reading from most of the participants' body language, they initially would be detached with little interest, but gradually paid full attention as we proceeded with questioning there and displayed eager and interest. With some participants, we noted some level of discomfort, which we are unable to point out the reason for that. Nonetheless, by the end of the all sessions, most participants showed excitement about these interviews and were looking forward to read the report, with the exception of one participant who was negative throughout the interview and we are unable to understand the reason for that as indicated upfront that participation was voluntary. In some instance, we noted that some participants grappled with concepts and understanding of questions, such that we had to spend time clarifying these concepts over-and-over again. Some digressed from responding directly to the questions such that the researcher had from time to time re-direct to the issues. With the researcher' understanding of critical contextual issues, we are of the opinion that some participants' responses were not honest, some exaggerated and some were surprisingly impressive. On conclusion of each interview, the recording was down loaded and stored into the researcher' computer and allocated a code for safekeeping and for the security of the data. During the research, there was three of the recordings damaged or the recording was not audible such that we had to re-do the interview and some participants were not available due to tight schedules. A lesson learned was that always check the recording devises or use good quality devises.

### **3.3.5 Data processing and analysis**

According to Bryman (2012), data analysis involves three elements, which are data management, data analysis and data interpretation, and uses statistical analysis of the questionnaire data and/or thematic analysis of interview transcript. Bryman further suggests this phase critical whereby researchers' reduce a large amount of information into meaningful sense. This also entails analysis of both primary and secondary data analysis (Bryman, 2012). For this study, we used of primary data from interviews and secondary data from documents analysis to collect data.

Davidson (2004) suggests that, because evaluations are generally intensely political, it is critical that its data analysis and interpretation are handles with care to avoid a lot of the political debates and follow-ups. In view of this assertion, in this study we explored an



open-ended continuous improvement approach to conducting data processing and analysis through each stage of data collection. We did this to take advantage of opportunities arising in between each of the research phases for continuous improvement of data collection instruments and approaches so that ultimately we capture all-important information that arose as we progressed.

Data processing in this study involved rigorous data management activities including preparation for data transcription, downloading all transcripts into a computer, checking for any flaws in it and cleaning it out for any possible errors. Further, on, we embarked on coding process of each transcript. Bryman (2012) proposes steps for coding and these are: (i) coding as soon as possible as the researcher goes along with the research, (ii) reading and re-reading through one's initial set of transcripts, field notes or documents, (iii) reviewing the codes, (iv) searching for recurrences of the sequences of coded text. As part of our data processing exercise, we followed all of the aforementioned steps to the latter. It was a very tedious exercise but worth embarking on. We thereafter embarked on a process of transforming data into categories, narrative, and themes in line with some of our pre-determined themes informed by document analysis and review of literature. This was done using an excel spread-sheet where we captured each respondents' responses on each of the emerging themes as follows: (i) conceptualisation of the programme theory, (ii) planning for implementation, (iii) implementation, (iv) context, (v) organisational support systems and (vi) barriers to implementation.

### **3.3.6 Description of research respondents**

We interviewed a total of fourteen respondents out of staff establishment of hundred and four who were purposefully identified because they are directly involved with implementation of skill development programme at varying levels. One respondent is a member of the senior management team comprised of nine members. Of the nine, only two members are directly involved with planning and implementation of programmes and our respondent is one of the two. He has worked for the ETDPSSETA for more than ten years. He is male and fall in the age category 40-50. We further interviewed seven out of nine Provincial Managers who are responsible for programme implementation in their respective Provinces. They have worked for the ETDPSSETA ranging from a minimum of two years to fourteen years. Four of the seven are males, three are females and all fall

in the age category 35-55. We also interviewed five of the eighteen Project Leaders who are directly responsible for implementing a number of skills development projects, which entails liaising with role players, recruitment of beneficiaries, monitoring of project, contract management, payment of service providers and beneficiaries. We chose the five because of the number of years they have been with the organisation, which ranges from four to fourteen years. Their age category is unknown but estimated to be between 35 and 50. We also interviewed one of the nine Quality Assurance officers who are responsible for monitoring implementation of projects and quality compliance. The respondent is female and falls in the age category of 45-50.

### **3.4 Research Reliability and validity measures**

According to Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer (2012) a credible research exercise, which its findings can be generalized and/or accepted by stakeholders, needs to be clear, with valid measures that are going to be gathered in a reliable, and consistent manner. These provide for a sound methodological rigour in any research. In qualitative studies, validity, which sometimes referred to trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility (Creswell, 2014). Creswell thus advises that researchers to start with developing credible measures and put strong procedures in place to ensure that measurements are consistent throughout time and space. In simple layman's terms, using these valid and reliable measures researchers have to ensure that their research can be replicated at any given point and time (Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer, 2012).

#### **3.4.1 Measurement validity**

Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer (2012) define measurement validity to be effectively concerned with accuracy of the measurement such that data collection procedures are appropriate and provide reasonable accurate information. Relevance, legitimacy and clarity of measures are also very critical for programme stakeholders to buy-in into the research exercise. For this study, we ensured validity of measures through various ways including regular consultation with programme key players at the design phase of measures. To further ensure credibility, after we collected data, key fundamental questions were posed and responded to and these questions are (i) do the measures correlate with agreed upon standard or criterion measure that is credible in the field of study? (ii) Do

measures correlate with other measures in ways that are consistent with theory and/or acceptable knowledge? (iii) do measures predict anticipated behaviours in ways consistent with accepted theory and knowledge? We engaged on these issues during brainstorming sessions with our four member advisory team during the data collection instrument design phase and after pre-testing the instrument.

### **3.4.2 Other aspects of validity**

Bryman (2012) introduces other aspects of validity besides measurements; these have an influence in the integrity of the research conclusions and will be discussed here below.

#### **3.4.2.1 Internal Validity**

Internal validity is how we determine causality in a particular study. It is the logic behind the observed correlations, which usually explains how a programme contributed to the observed changes (Ton, 2012). This is not applicable in our study as the nature of the research questions were not attempting to determine causality. Our study is merely attempting to understand how implementation of skills development programmes rolls out in the sector.

#### **3.4.2.2 External Validity**

External validity refers to the manner in which findings are generalizable to other persons, times and contexts. This usually needs precision on the conditions and requirements that explain the generalization aspects (Ton, 2012). The nature of our research design, which is a case study, limits us in respect to generalising our findings. It however has been useful in assisting us to have a deeper understanding of the phenomenon we were investigating.

Creswell (2014) does suggest some strategies that researcher can use to enhance both the internal and external validity of their studies. We attempted these validity strategies through triangulating multiple data sources from interviews and documents analysis. We also used what Creswell refers to as member checking by taking preliminary findings back to the research participants for further clarity and confirmation. We used thick

descriptions to convey present our findings and other finding as suggested by other writers in the field of study.

### **3.4.3 Reliability of Measurement**

Reliability measure enhances methodological rigour. Wholey et al (2012) define reliability of measure as the extent to which a measurement instrument produces similar results on repeated observations of the same phenomenon, condition or event. This suggests that an interview schedule should be able to measure consistently the same phenomena and consistently record data with the same decision criteria. Wholey et al advise that data entries needs to be also carefully handled during this process, as it can be one major source of errors. In this study, we attempted to ensure reliability of measurement by pre-testing the data collection instruments and procedures over and over again, the researcher was directly involved in data collection, handling and processing. Over and above, quality control procedures that we put in place in the design phase of the instrument were able to assist us in identifying possible obstacle to consistent measure when going to the field.

Nonetheless, according to Neumann, (2011) a perfect reliability is a virtually impossible concept to achieve; rather an ideal a researcher must thrive to achieve. He continues to suggest that in a qualitative research study, reliability is a matter of principle rather than a stern concept as in a quantitative measurement. In a qualitative research study, reliability is dependability and consistency as data is one evolving and living organism that change over time. (Neumann, 2011). Despite this, we tried our utmost best to ensure dependability and consistency through using a range of data sources but also use multiple data gathering methods (interviews and document analysis) to triangulate information we found.

## **3.5 Limitations**

As we have alluded above in our discussion of validity and reliability of measurement, as much as we are confident that our study carries some level of credibility, dependability and consistency, because of the research design used – case study, we may not be able to generalise our findings to the ETD sector. This is on its own becomes a limitation to the study. We are confident enough that the findings will be useful to the ETDPSSETA and

its recommendations usable to inform some of its implementation processes. The other limitation was that due to time and budget constraints, we were not able to interview training providers, constituency employers and the beneficiaries of the programmes. The SETA should consider for further research into the future.

## **4. Presentation of Findings**

This research was set out to assess implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector. We used the ETDP SETA as a case study. To undertake this assessment, we posed two research questions. First, how is the ETDPSETA implementing skills development programme in the ETD sector? Secondly, what are the challenges experienced by the programme implementers in the implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector? This chapter intends to present the findings on each research question. Sub-sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.5 present findings on the first question, while section 4.2 presents the findings in response to the second research question.

### **4.1 Implementation of skills development programme in the ETD sector**

Having analysed the ETDPSETA five-year strategic plan and the annual performance plans, we observed that they planned to implement seven programmes that focused on different aspects of skill development, national and sector priorities. In focussing our study and the line of questioning, we chose the Youth Development programme, which is programme five in the Strategic Plan and APP. We chose this programme because when we analysed the financial expenditure of the ETDPSETA, we noted that it spends more than sixty per cent of its annual discretionary grants or programme funds on this programme.

Based on literature review and our thematic analysis, we identified six broad categories within which are presented as the research findings and are as follows, (i) conceptualisation of the programme, (ii) planning for implementation, (iii) implementation or delivery systems, (iv) context of implementation, (v) organisational support systems, and (vi) challenges in the implementation. The respondents' perceptions on the first five elements seek to respond to the first research question while perceptions on sixth elements seek to respond to the second research question. The perceptions will be presented as per three broad category of the research respondents.

#### **4.1.1 Perception of senior management**

#### **4.1.1.1 Conceptualisation of the programme**

Management is of the view that the youth development programme is generally the most difficult programme to conceptualise. The main reason for that is that it targets unemployed people, whereas when the SETA does its planning; it focuses mainly on employed people. This is in view of the fact that sector skills planning processes used to inform the development of the sector skills plan (SSP), generally focus on workers' needs. The SSP focuses at skills needs of employees within various sub-sectors in the ETD sector. On the other, conceptualisation of the youth development programme informed only by data that is retrieved from the national priorities list. National imperatives that seek to address youth employment also inform the conceptualisation of this youth development programme. It is precisely why the programme focuses on workplace experience for TVET colleges and Universities of Technology (UoTs), learnerships, internships, bursaries and matric-rewrite second change programmes. The essence of the programme is to give unemployed youth skills and place them in workplace experience programmes. Even though management feels that there was no deeper thinking around what kind of change is required from these young people after undergoing the programme, based on literature, the main idea is to see demonstrable skills and increase their absorption rate into the labour market. Therefore, management is of the view that there are two critical components of this programme, and are: (i) skilling through the theoretical component, and (ii) employment through the workplace experience component. Management does however admit to the fact that the organisation failed in terms of ensuring that content and structure meets the target audience.

#### **4.1.1.2 Planning for implementation**

Senior management admits to have fallen short over the years in documenting the process for planning for implementation. However, they are of the view that once the programme is in the annual performance plan, the first process of planning for implementation begins with the allocations to Provinces based on the analysis of the provincial needs and not necessarily as it is in SSP. Thereafter, the allocations will fall into the implementation strategy, informed by consultation with stakeholders, recruitment of learners and training providers. This model according to senior management is applicable to workplace-based projects. While in bursaries, it entails recruitment of beneficiaries through employers.

#### 4.1.1.3 Implementation/delivery systems

According to senior management, the Provincial Offices are the delivery channels for programmes. However, the process commences with ensuring that programme documentation is in place. It then moves on ensuring that young people are in class, for learnerships while for internships, the learners must be with the employers. Once they have completed the latter process, and mechanisms that are in place will show that the programme has started which are: (i) the documentation, (ii) attendance registers, and monitoring reports. Thereafter, programme staff will submit reports on a monthly and quarterly basis to indicate how far the programme is in terms of implementation and these reports come with evidence. The reports will include reports from employers and reports from service providers. Senior management suggest that because the youth development programme has a few projects within it, it requires a project management approach to planning that is on line to track its delivery but with the absence of such a system, the organisation heavily relies on human capital in terms of delivery and tracking projects.

Asked who key role players are in planning for implementation, senior management responded:

*“The intricacy of the chosen programme is that each of the sub-programmes has different stakeholders so it’s not generic stakeholders. You have the learner who has to commit that they will be in the sub-programme; an employer who commits to hosting the learner throughout the duration of the learnership, the service providers who is obliged to deliver a quality programme and the SETA that not only provides the funding for the programme but ensures that the programme is correctly implemented in terms of quality assurance as well as monitoring”.*

Again, asked whether implementation staff implement in line with implementation plans and programme design, senior management responded as follows:

*“I would say yes and no. It is like starting a race; all of you have the same goal but taking different routes to the same destination. We are not following the same route to get to the same outcome. What matters is what happens in the middle that. People are given the same brief but follow different approaches to achieve the set targets. But, at the end similar goals have been*



*achieved. By accident we get to the destination. We arrive at the destination at the last minute. We have not interrogated the middle in terms of delivery. There is confusion in the middle.”*

#### **4.1.1.4 Context/Environment for implementation**

Senior management is of the view that there is not enough information & knowledge on youth development and that has led to a decision to appoint a research chair, to generate the knowledge in order to assist the organisation to understand the context within which to operate in terms implementation of the youth development programmes.

Senior management is also of the view that SETA staff is not knowledgeable enough and as a result operate within an ill-informed context.

*“It is my view that we need to partner with youth formations that deal with unemployed youths because they know and are in a position to advice on the approaches to be undertaken in involving the youths in the programmes.”*

The statement directly quoted from the senior management response. Senior management is also of the view that they have done a hit and miss because of relying on the employers who in most instances do not understand the needs of the youth within the communities.

#### **4.1.1.5 Support Systems**

In terms of training of staff, senior management is of the view that the organisation does very well in ensuring that staff is trained in order to be able to deliver the programmes. They are of the view that because of the SETAs mandate, which is concerned about training and skills development, they therefore have to be leaders in that regard. Senior management is of the view it is one area that the organisation does very well.

However, in relation to technical general support, senior management responded as follows:

*“MIS system is very weak, for the past five years it’s been bad and it has become worse recently.”* And *“implementation is usually left with operations and they have to see to finish.”* This implies that technical and general support is weak or not in place.

#### **4.1.2 Perception of provincial management**

##### **4.1.2.1 Conceptualisation of the programme**

According to provincial management, the youth development programme intends to create a better life for unemployed youth through skilling by offering appropriate qualifications and exposing them to workplace experience learning. This is to increase opportunities for employment for unemployed youth. Provincial management is also of the view that once young people have undergone the various sub-programmes within this programme there will be high chances for them to be absorbed into the labour market or/and for them to come up with innovative ways to make a better living. So, critical to the success of this programme are two core components: (i) workplace sites and (ii) relevant qualifications or the theoretical aspect.

##### **4.1.2.2 Planning for implementation**

According to Provincial management, planning for implementation commences with the allocation of targets to various Provinces by the COO. Based on the allocations, Provincial Managers will then initiate a consultation process with key stakeholders including the Department of Education, Offices of Premier and others. The consultations are to identify specific interventions, implementation areas, discuss recruitment of beneficiaries and identifying members of projects steering committees. Once specific they have identified interventions, procurement of training providers will ensue, however that is coordinated at the Head Office through the COO office and Supply Chain Management unit. Upon conclusion of the procurement of training providers, the SETA enters into service level agreements with the appointed training providers. The appointed training providers will then present project implementation plans to project steering committees. They discuss these plans with various stakeholders sitting in the committee. The steering

committees include the SETA represented by the Provincial Manager or the Skills Advisors, participating employers, beneficiaries of training and the training providers. All of these stakeholders are key roles players in the planning for implementation. The implementation plan includes key elements such as time lines for induction sessions, time lines for the training and workplace placement.

#### **4.1.2.3 Implementation and delivery systems**

The structure of implementation involves all of the aforementioned key role players, the skills advisors/project leaders who are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the projects, quality assurance officers who are responsible for monitoring the quality of delivery, and the projects administrators. The Provincial Manager allocates projects to the two project leaders in each of the provincial offices.

Once the Provincial Manager has allocated specific projects to project leaders, the process of recruiting beneficiaries will commence. The employers that are participating in that specific project mainly do this process of recruitment. The role of the SETA in the recruitment is to provide recruitment criteria that is line with the APP transformational imperatives i.e. 85 per cent of beneficiaries must black, 60 per-cent women, 60 per-cent must come from rural areas, and 5 per cent are people with disabilities. Even with criteria in place, provincial managers are of the view that employers do not always recruit in line with it. All parties including programme staff and projects steering committee meet regularly in order to track progress of implementation.

Provincial management admits to the fact that implementation is not always in line with the implementation plan and the programme' original design/intent. There is also admission to fact that implementation is not standardised across other implementation sites in other provinces. This is due to lack of implementation guidelines and standard operating procedures. Delays in the procurement of training providers cited reasons put forth for the lack of alignment to implementation plans. They admit that sometimes employers who recruit beneficiaries outside the requirements of the training and placement contribute this non-alignment between programme design and implementation.

#### **4.1.2.4 Context/Environment**

There is agreement amongst provincial management that even though there are a few challenges; the external context of implementation is welcoming. Stakeholders are appreciative of the projects therefore supportive in the implementation. However, the internal context of implementation is not to be conducive due to poor planning, which is contributory to the late implementation of projects. The internal context currently focusses on achieving targets, which limits creativity and has unrealistic timelines that force individuals to take short cuts in implementation. The internal context does not provide space and opportunity for individuals to excel and show their worth. One respondent described it as a toxic and full of negative competition.

#### **4.1.2.5 Support Systems**

Provincial management is of the view that while the organisation has bursaries for staff to develop themselves, provincial staff generally has skills and knowledge to implement programmes and project. What seems to be lacking is technical support and general assistance in respect to the following areas, procurement of goods and services, VIP, PIMM and IT. Provincial management is of the view that in order to improve on these areas, the organisation needs to enforce a functional quality management system clearly outlining processes and procedures. All respondents agree that there are no mechanism in the organisation to review the programmes' original design and implementation thereof.

### **4.1.3 Perception of project leaders**

#### **4.1.3.1 Conceptualisation of the programme**

Project leaders understood the programme theory to be an attempt to assist unemployed young people to be skilled through various workplace-based qualifications in order to increase opportunities for employment and to alleviate poverty. Project leaders also understood that workplace placement, mentorship, and coaching to be core components of this programme. They understood that failure to have these in place would compromise

the quality of this programme. They also understood the components to include communication, self-management and community work.

#### **4.1.3.2 Planning for implementation**

Project leaders are also of the opinion that planning for implementation commences with senior management processes of ensuring that the APP is in place and approved. In the provinces, the process must begin with consultation with key stakeholders such as the Department of Education and other employers. This is so done in order to get their reassurance and commitment in placing the beneficiaries in workplaces. They are of the view that consultation will avoid working in silos. During consultation, they establish projects committees comprised of stakeholders and get inputs into planning. The planning process is in two phases, the first phase including all administrative processes entailing procurement of providers, signing of memoranda of understanding, signing of service level agreements, recruitment, collation of learner documentation, and issuance of purchase orders. The second phase entails the actual rollout plan or the training schedule, which informs implementation and monitoring. Project leaders are of the opinion that senior management in the capacity of COO as custodians of policies including Provincial managers who oversee implementation at the provincial level are key role players in planning for implementation. They are however, supported by skills advisors, quality assurance officers, administrators, learners, training providers and employers in the sector. Project leaders identified the supply chain management (SCM) unit as another very critical role-player in the planning for implementation.

#### **4.1.3.3 Implementation/Delivery system**

Project leaders contend that the role players involved in the planning for implementation form the core of the delivery structure. They believe that implementation follows the planning phase as it involves the actual implementation and monitoring of training centres and workplaces. Upfront they admit that implementation and monitoring are areas in most instances neglected. Monitoring ensures that the workplace is conducive for learning and that learners have all relevant tools for learning. Implementation includes payment of training providers and learner allowances. The project leaders are of the view that paying

learner allowances is not much of a challenge but paying training providers is the most tedious and cumbersome process because of the paper work that is involved. This has led to delayed payments to a point where contracts expire.

According to project leaders, implementation involves recruitment of beneficiaries, which mostly done by the host employers. They believe that there are good stories and bad stories of recruitment. Of course, once recruitment complete and Provincial Managers have allocated areas of responsibility to their project leaders, induction of beneficiaries and signing of tripartite agreements between learners, employers and training providers will ensue. Project leaders would take programme beneficiaries through the relevant forms and compliance documentation.

Project leaders are of the view that while targets are achieved unfortunately implementation seems not to be in line with the programme' original intent and the theory of change. They contend that despite having gone through the various training and workplace exposure, beneficiaries remain unemployed after they completed the programmes. Project leaders contend that only about twenty per cent would be in employment the rest would jump into another available learnership or internship. They believe that there could be more and different things the SETA could do to alleviate this. They contend that the lack of implementation guidelines and procedures is one area that could be improved to ensure standardisation and alignment to implementation plans, and programme' original design. They also believe that some of the beneficiaries go into these programmes to get stipends rather than getting qualifications.

#### **4.1.3.4 Context of implementation**

Project leaders describe the implementation context as pressurised and stressful. They argue that this is due to poor planning for implementation. They contend that in many instances training providers are appointed in January and they would be expected to report progress by end March, which is usually the end of financial year. They also contend that constantly changing demands and directives contribute to that stressful work environment.

In respect to the external context, they believe that is sometimes conducive and sometimes not. They contend that there are instances where employers place these learners in environments that are not conducive for learning and without adequate resources. In some workplaces, there are not mentors to guide these learners. Project leaders further suggest that there are instances where there are political interferences used by employers to push political agendas in the workplace or community. They also do find that there are instance where beneficiaries are not doing well despite adequate support provided by the training providers. This in many instances is due learning barriers, as some learners cannot express themselves in English, which is the usual medium of tuition.

#### **4.1.3.5 Support systems**

Project leaders contend that there is no formalised training support appropriated for project implementation except through bursaries and in meetings where concerning issues discussed. Day to day technical assistance and general support is sporadic and sometimes not even there. Project leaders contend that they have to discover information on their own due to lack of formalised organisational process of providing technical support e.g. training on organisational IT systems, policies, etc.

### **4.2 Challenges experienced in the implementation of skills development programmes**

#### **4.2.1 Perception of senior management**

Senior management is of the view that the biggest challenges in the implementation of the programme relate to placement beneficiaries in workplaces. This is both during the implementation and after completion of the programmes. Senior management is also of the view that implementation itself is posing a challenge. Lastly, senior management is of the view that the qualifications such as Early Child Development (ECD), Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and Community Development have reached their sell-by date. Asked to respond to the question, this is how senior management responded:

*“Placement is one, and two it is not sticking to conceptualization – our implementation is laïzes faire, anyone does what they want and not sticking to the original conceptualization framework therefore making implementation process challenging in the sense that everyone does what they want to. The third challenge is that some of our programmes have now reached their sell-by dates they now need to be reviewed such as the ECD/ AET and ComDev programmes, which do not always yield the expected results. Although the ETQA unit is in the process of trying to re-phase these programmes but they have long expired. The sooner we stop implementing the better.”*

#### **4.2.2 Perception of provincial management**

Provincial managers have expressed late implementation as one of their challenges, which is related or due to delays in procurement of training providers. They also indicated that, perhaps due to a lack of structured and formalised training and technical support, they sometimes feel overwhelmed with too much work and chasing targets, which, tends to compromise thorough monitoring of implementation. The amount of documentation required to proof enrolments and multiple projects that implemented simultaneously together with a lack of a fully functional management of information system are some of the challenges raised Provincial managers sometime feel challenged as they realise that they are training beneficiaries for unemployment.

#### **4.2.3 Perception of project leaders**

Poor planning and late implementation of projects are the biggest challenges for project leaders, followed by conflicting messages or directives, the lack of clear and consistent guidelines and procedures. Project leaders are also of the view that conceptualisation of the programme informed neither by a proper needs analysis nor by adequate consultation with both Provincial managers and Project Leaders. While recruitment focusses on rural communities, project leaders find that beneficiaries from these areas struggle extremely with English as a medium of class tuition and assessment.



## **5. Discussion of research findings**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, we have presented the findings of the study as articulated by the research respondents, and now in this chapter we will discuss these findings in details. The discussion underpinned by some of the theoretical frameworks that we presented in the literature review chapter. In the discussion, we intend to adequately provide answers to the two research questions that have been posed earlier (i) How is the ETDPSETA implementing skills development in the ETD sector (ii) What are the challenges experienced by programme implementers in the implementation of skills development programmes in the sector.

### **5.2 Implementation of skills development in the sector**

Our findings generally reflect fundamental flaws in certain important areas of quality implementation. In their description and presentation of the quality implementation framework, Meyers et al. (2012) contend that there are three fundamental theoretical assumptions underlying quality implementation and they are:

- (i) the programme must be well defined with clear and specific standards for implementation, which include core components, active ingredients, critical features and essential elements;
- (ii) the programme must explicitly include monitoring and evaluation of implementation to ensure that it implemented in practice in line with its original intent and design;
- (iii) the programme can be adapted to suit the host setting, however in doing that core components may not be changed and thus it becomes very critical to document upfront how the programme can be adjusted.

To support the abovementioned assertions Fixsen et al. (2005) define quality implementation as an act of putting a programme in action in the manner that it meets the necessary standards for it to achieve the desired outcomes. This definition also assumes that there are programme standards in place, that there are clear monitoring and evaluation activities included in plan and that there clearly documented adaptations to accommodate contextual fit. The programme theory articulates all of these. Weis (1972)

also suggests that if practitioners wish to enhance the utilization of any evaluation outcome, it is important for them to ensure that such efforts analyse the theoretical premises of the programme, specification of programme processes and linkages between inputs and programme outcomes, and analysis of the programme components' effectiveness.

The findings that we presented in the previous chapter and our analysis of the ETDPSETA youth development results chain framework, we noted that the theory underpinning the youth development programme together with the programme' specifications and processes are not articulated or documented which we are of the view that it is a fundamental flaw to quality implementation. This is a fundamental flaw in how the SETA conceptualises its programmes. We also noted that the research respondents attempted to articulate the theory underpinning the programme in various ways; however, this not documented in any of the SETA planning documents that we analysed, documents such as the sector skills plan, the strategic plan and the annual performance plan. According to Weis (1972), Funnel (2000) and Rogers (2008) in conceptualising a programme theory, seven critical components need to be in place. They include articulation of immediate outcomes (proximal), intermediate outcomes (medial) and long-term outcome (distal) expressed as impacts; articulation of success criteria; articulation of programme factors affecting its success; articulation of non-programme factors affecting its success or non-success; articulation of key activities and resources necessary to implement the programme; articulation of performance indicators; and articulation of various sources of data. We found that the youth development programme' result chain framework, as articulated in the SETA Five Year Strategic Plan, includes proximal and medial outcomes, baseline targets and actual targets. It however lacks the other key aspects as articulated above in Weis, Funnel and Rogers, which explains the lack of standardised implementation in various implementation sites and various challenges in relation to implementation expressed by the research respondents.

According to the DPME guideline for planning of new implementation programmes (Guideline 2.2.3, 2013), programme plans must clearly articulate the programme theory of change, which clearly indicates the core logic of process assumed in the intervention. It must as well articulate assumptions, a log frame, which articulates impacts, outcomes, outputs activities, inputs and assumptions. It must include an explanation of the causal

mechanisms of how activities and outputs will lead to intended outcomes; and a management unit within the organisation that is responsible for the delivery of those defined services and functions including a clear budget. Based on the findings, the ETDPSETA does seem to meet two of the abovementioned DPME' requirements for an efficient programme planning implementation, which are setting up sound management structures/units responsible for delivery of services and budget allocation. We are of the opinion that the two critical aspects, which are (i) a well-defined theory of change and (ii) a complete log-frames that articulate impacts, outcomes, outputs activities, inputs with assumptions as well as explanation of the causal mechanism of how activities and outputs will lead to intended outcomes, are lacking, and require strengthening in their planning for programme.

The aforementioned guidelines further suggest that programmes of over R100 million should have implementation plans entailing: a(i) diagnostic analysis or problem analysis, (ii) a high-level analysis of options for address the problem, (iii) a description of how the specific programme contributes to organisational and national government strategic objectives, (iv) programme target groups, (v) theory of change in a form of a log-frame, (vi) activities outlined in detail, (vii) projects with projects log-frame, (viii) allocation of responsibilities, management arrangements, (ix) risk management plan, (x) cost estimates and (xi) a programme life-cycle evaluation plan.

Our interrogation of the organisational documents and the respondents' responses, we noted that there is no organisational implementation plan that articulates the aforementioned aspects. Some respondents referred to individual projects implementation plans that were only limited to a specific project within each of the delivery units and within the youth development programme. This explains why there is lack of standardisation of implementation across the nine programme delivery units as indicated in the findings.

In accordance with Meyers and Durlak' quality implementation framework (QIF) that we discussed in-depth in our literature review, who identify fourteen critical steps to be followed in order to ensure quality implementation and these should take place prior the actual implementation. One of the fourteen steps include the development of an implementation plan, which affirms the aforementioned assertion by the DPME

guidelines discussed earlier. This critical step combined together with the creation of the implementation teams within phase two of the quality implementation framework. Our findings do show that there are adequate strong implementation teams in various Provinces that have been set up, however there is indication from our findings that these teams feel overloaded or overwhelmed by their work due to a pressurised context of implementation. The findings further suggest that poor planning may be a key cause of this pressurised implementation context. Findings also show that the pressurised environments have affected quality of implementation negatively, as implementers tend to opt for quick fix approaches to implementation and tend to neglect monitoring which should be in place for quality implementation.

The quality implementation framework also suggests other steps within on-going implementation support strategies that entail setting up technical assistance/coaching/supervision for implementation, process evaluation and supportive feedback mechanisms. Our research findings show that even though that implementation teams feel confident in their execution of tasks and even though that the SETA has a bursary system for staff development, there seems to be no formal structures for technical assistance, process evaluation and supportive feedback. Because there are indications that there are no review mechanisms for implementation, therefore that defeats the learning and improvement application aspects of the fourteen steps of the quality implementation framework.

Phase one of the quality implementation framework, encapsulate most of the fourteen critical steps for implementation, these include (i) conducting a needs and resources assessment, (ii) conducting a programme fit assessment, (iii) conducting a capacity/readiness assessment, (iv) possibility for programme adaptation, (v) getting buy-in from critical stakeholders and fostering a supportive climate, (vi) building organisational capacity, (vii) staff recruitment and (viii) an effective pre-innovation staff training. Our findings show that implementation of the youth development programme in the SETA does not always follow the abovementioned steps. Findings show the one thing that ETDPSETA does well in their implementation, is consultation of critical stakeholders with the view of securing buy-in and fostering a supportive climate. However, there is no evidence suggesting that this consultation is done at the initial

programme conceptualisation stage, which is usually linked to assessing programme fit and prior allocations to Provinces.

The ecological framework for effective implementation suggests five critical components necessary for effective implementation and we outlined in-depth them in the literature review chapter. Two of the five critical elements deemed to be at the core for implementation are, (i) the organisational structure responsible for implementation and (ii) the training and technical support for organisational capacity. Our findings show while the former is in place and adequate, the latter one of the two, which is training and technical support seems to be lacking or very weak at the ETDPSSETA. According to Durlak and DuPre (2008) these five key elements in the Ecological Framework interact with each on an ongoing basis to influence effective implementation. If one or two of these elements are weak, or compromised, that tends to influence negatively on the others and as such negatively influence effective implementation. It is therefore evident that if one of the core elements is missing obviously the effectiveness or quality of implementation in the ETD sector will be compromised.

### **5.3 Implementation challenges experiences by implementer**

Common challenges to effective implementation as expressed by senior management, provincial management and project leaders are inadequate conceptualisation of the youth development programme, late implementation due to poor planning, inadequate support system such as lack of implementation guideline and procedures, lack of implementation review processes, and inadequate technical assistance and training. These are an indication of a lack in the fundamental aspects as espoused in the Programme Theory Model, the Ecological Framework for effective implementation and the Quality Framework for Implementation discussed above. This certainly compromises the quality and effectiveness of implementation.

## **6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations**

This chapter wraps up the research report by presenting a summary of the whole research process in section 6.1, presenting some concluding remarks in section 6.2 and making recommendations into the future in section 6.3.

### **6.1 Summary**

The research study is a resultant of a number of challenges or problems raised throughout the country regarding the effectiveness of the skills development system in particular the role played by the SETAs as they facilitate and implement numerous skills development programmes in their respective economic sector. The research problem discussed in-depth in the introductory chapter of the report, however can be summarised as inadequate and weak organisational systems for programme planning and implementation within SETAs. We took a particular interest in understanding how the ETDPSETA as a case study implements its skill development programmes in the education, training and development sector and the challenges that it experiences in the process of implementation of these skills development programmes. The main purpose of doing this study was to analyse or assess how the ETDPSETA implements its programmes in order to gather adequate implementation data to prepare for future evaluations of impact planned as the SETA wraps up its five-year strategic plan. We also hoped that the information gathered would assist in contextualising the basis for the criticism of the skills system.

We chose a qualitative case study research approach and a naturalistic inquiry most suitable to respond to the two research questions posed in chapter one, which are (i) how is the ETDPSETA implementing skills development programmes in the education, training and development sector, (ii) what are the challenges experienced by the implementers as they implement these skills development programmes.

We conducted an in-depth literature review and documents analysis in order to interrogate other similar and past studies conducted by other researchers. This assisted us to further refine the research questions and in developing a suitable conceptual framework for assessing implementation in the sector. Upon approval of the research proposal by both

ETDPSETA CEO and the WITS School of Governance, we embarked on intensive preparations that subsequently led into conducting one-on-one and group interviews and conducting a further in-depth documents analysis these included SETA planning documents, implementation and monitoring reports, financial reports, annual reports and all skills development related policy documents published by government.

Based on a rigorous data analysis and triangulation, we presented the findings in chapter 4, interpreted and discussed the findings using three explanatory or theoretical frameworks identified through our literature review and discussed in depth in chapter 2. Interesting findings we noted and are (i) poor conceptualisation of the skills development programmes, (ii) poor planning for implementation which is linked to conceptualisation of programmes and; (iii) inadequate support system such as lack of implementation guideline and procedures, lack of implementation review processes, and inadequate technical assistance and training.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

To conclude our report, it is important to note that it is necessary to conduct regular assessment of implementation through various means including conducting process evaluations or implementation analysis. According to the DPME Guideline 2.2.12 for implementation evaluation, it is critical that the exercise of documenting implementation is planned for from the beginning of implementation and completed in time so that it informs decisions around scaling up or down of innovations. This can be done at any given point in time during the programme cycle but more useful when it is done earlier so that information that comes from the exercise can be used to put corrective measures earlier in order to improve implementation rather than at a later stage. Of course, this is likely to inform the impact trajectory of the programme. It thus becomes critical that the programme theory or theory of change underpinning the programme is very clear onset when particular impacts anticipated are to guide the timing and the focus of the implementation analysis. In this case, the analysis was conducted almost towards the conclusion of the programme, which its results may not necessarily inform decisions about corrective measures for improving current implementation but can be used to open the 'black box' in order to assist interpreting results or findings from future impact studies.

Furthermore the aforementioned DPME guidelines caution implementation analysis practitioners about the legitimacy and trade-offs for different forms of implementation analysis designs. The guidelines suggest an intensive and longer analysis design that collects data from all implementation sites to provide responses for every single research question even though it can be very costly financially and in time but produces outcomes that carry more credibility as opposed to short, cost effective, done internally evaluations and provide answers to all research questions. This could pose as a limitation of this research as the researcher is from within the organisation, and conducted the study with limited resources both in time and financially.

There is generally also consensus in most literature we reviewed that the implementation process is a systematic process with a series of interrelated steps that require to be handled or attended to effectively in order to enhance quality implementation. Findings of our study suggest that as much as the ETDPSETA is achieving its set targets, there are major shortcomings in how the SETA handles implementation of its skills development programmes. There is no indication that implementation is carried out systematically in line with numerous implementation frameworks espoused in implementation, monitoring and evaluation literature.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

In view of the aforementioned backdrop, the following are the recommendations we are presenting for considerations.

#### **6.3.1 Conceptualisation of programmes**

In line with the theoretical frameworks used to interpret our research findings, namely the Programme Theory Model as articulated in Funnel (2000), the ETDPSETA has a responsibility to ensure that, as part of conceptualising programmes, it also develops comprehensive results chain frameworks for both programmes and projects. These must clearly articulate sequenced hierarchies of intended outcomes that include proximal, medial and distal outcomes. Thereafter, for each of the articulated outcomes, a series of



questions and answers recorded on programme logic matrix or results chain. The questions are:

- (i) what would the success of both programmes and projects look like, which is the nature of change?
- (ii) what are both programme specific and non-programme specific factors that influence the achievement of the each outcomes – for example, the quality of service delivery?
- (iii) what are the inputs, activities and outputs necessary to execute or implement a programme or project?
- (iv) what qualitative or quantitative information will be collected and what comparisons to be made thereof, and lastly
- (v) how performance information is going to be collected.

Fixsen et al. (2005) support the aforementioned assertion who articulate five critical elements of an appropriately conceptualised programme and are:

- (i) a clear philosophy, beliefs and values that give guidance for judgements, decisions, evaluations and fully integrated with the delivery mechanisms in order to enhance consistency, integrity and sustainable efforts across all programme components,
- (ii) specific technologies that enhance consistency during implementation,
- (iii) a decision making framework that is delegated to each programme staff with appropriate accountability systems,
- (iii) a structured delivery programme components that include context for implementation, defined service locations and timelines, and most importantly staff development systems; and continuous improvement mechanism to encourage innovations with scrutiny to see benefits.

### **6.3.2 Planning for implementation of programmes**

We further recommend that efforts must put in place to encourage a centralised and rigorous process of planning for implementation and this should happen after the annual performance planning processes. In line with DPME guidelines for programme planning, this process should entail:

- (i) an intensive problem analysis,

- (ii) a high-level presentation of other options to address the problem,
- (iii) a description of how the specific programme contributes organisational and national government strategic objectives,
- (iv) a description of programme target groups,
- (v) a theory of change in a form of a log-frame, with activities clearly outlined in detail,
- (vi) description of specific project within a programme with their own projects log-frame,
- (vii) allocation of responsibilities, management arrangements for each programme,
- (viii) a risk management plan with mitigating measures,
- (ix) clear budgets, and very critical
- (x) a programme life-cycle evaluation plan which includes implementation evaluations.

### **6.3.3 Programme delivery and support system**

The Ecological framework for successful implementation in Durlak and DuPre (2008) identifies five critical factors that affect quality implementation and discussed in detail in earlier chapters. Two of the five factors, which are deemed core and critical include the programme delivery and support structure. It is against this backdrop that we recommend to the ETDPSETA a necessity to consider reviewing these two aspects within its planning and implementation.

This process should include identification of champions for each of the programmes in the annual performance plan and these champions will be responsible of driving implementation of the aforementioned two recommendation. This is necessary as clearly according to the current organogram of the ETDPSETA, the Chief Operations Officer (COO) oversees this process and it is our view that looking at the diverse nature of the programmes implemented by the ETDPSETA, it is impractical and impossible for one individual to drive these processes.

The champions will also be involved in specific actions including (i) fostering relationships with each programme stakeholders by communicating a need for such programmes internally and externally, (ii) communicating perceived benefits of the programme both internally and externally, (iii) establish practices that counterbalance resistance to change by propagating new ways of doing things and clarifying opportunities through involvement of the programme implementers in decision making processes, (iv) create

policies and guidelines to promote accountability, (v) encourage shared-decision making and; (vi) enhance an adequate administrative support systems to address technical training, general technical support and assistance.

The programme champions will be also required to document all activities for implementation of programmes, document monitoring and evaluation activities, which are a critical aspect of quality implementation, establish clear specific timelines, allocate tasks based on orientation, training and regular performance reviews; and ultimately facilitate evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation.

#### **6.3.4 Future research**

Based on the limitations of this study as highlighted above, the SETA may also have to consider commissioning research to ascertain the influence of the following factors on implementation: (i) training providers' characteristics, (ii) training participants' characteristics, (iii) the match between the training provider, participant, the programme; characteristics; and (iv) the role of employers.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1.1: Data Collection Instrument**

#### **Implementation of skills development programmes in the education training and development sector.**

##### **Introduction**

I am Sibongile Nhlabathi, a Master in Management in the field of Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation student with WITS Graduate School of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand. I am conducting research on the implementation of skills development programs in the Education, Training and Development (ETD) sector. I am going to provide you with more information later when we meet and I invite you to be a part of this research study. Of course, you do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate. The purpose of this research study is to systematically assess the implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector utilizing the ETDPSETA as a case study. Literature refers to this exercise as implementation evaluation or process evaluation.

##### **Ethical issues of informed consent**

If you accept to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one on one interview and/or focus group discussion, which will be led by me – Ms Sibongile Nhlabathi. The entire discussion will be tape-recorded, and you will not be identified by name on the tape if you choose. The tape will be kept and stored in a safe place. The information recorded will also be kept confidential, and no one else except me will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after the research report has been produced.

##### **Main questions**

##### **Describing the Programme**

- Describe the underpinning philosophy or theory of change the ETDPSETA' Youth Development Programme.
- Clear articulate the core components of this programme, objectives and purposes.

### **Planning for implementation**

- Will you kindly describe at length the SETA processing of developing an implementation plan for this programme and are the key role players involved in this process.
- What are the key elements of this plan? Please elaborate
- Can we have access to a copy of this plan?

### **Implementation/Delivery Systems**

- Describe at length the implementation/delivery structure for rolling out this programme, how is it determined and what are its components?
- Please list key role players in the structure.
- Do you think that implementation of this programme over the year and in the various implementing sites (Provinces) is in line with the programme' original intent theoretical underpinnings, design and its implementation plans? Please elaborate.
- What measures have been put in place to ensure that there is alignment between the implementation plan and the actual implementation?
- What is the level of standardisation and compliance during the implementation?
- Describe the process of recruiting participants of this programme. Is it in line with the programme theory, intent and original design? How do you ensure that there is alignment between the two?

### **Context**

- How will you describe the context or environment within which this programme is implemented? Focus on both internally and externally.
- Mention some of the critical factors that positively or negatively affect implementation of this programme.

### **Support Systems**

- What is the frequency and type of training/technical support/assistance is in place for your delivery structure and/or implementation?

- What are the core components of that training/assistance and technical support provided by the SETA.
- In the five-year of implementation of this programme, have you reviewed its original design and the effectiveness of its implementation? Describe the various forms of review that you have conducted.

### **General**

- What do think are critical factors for successful implementation of skills development in the ETD sector and why?
- Please, elaborate on the implementation challenges too.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you your participation and please note each participant will receive a summary of the results. There will also be follow up small meetings, as we deem necessary. Following those meetings, we will submit the results to WITS and management.

## **Appendix 1.2: Profile of the researcher**

Sibongile Ida Eulalia Nhlabathi, is currently working for ETDP SETA as a Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist as from 15 September 2014. She joined the company in January 2001 as a Skills Development Advisor later promoted to Head of Department (HOD) Advisory Services. She has since then been deployed in various capacities within the SETA ranging from being an Acting Research Skills Planning & Constituency Support to until recently being Provincial Manager – North West Office.

Before joining the ETDPSETA, she worked at the National Treasury as a Chief Training Officer between the period 01 November 1999 till 31 December 2000. She was recruited to the National Treasury from the then Gauteng Department of Health where she worked as a Senior Training Officer between the period 01 July 1998 till 31 October 1999. Prior then, she worked as a Teacher of English, Business Economic and Life Orientation at Luhlaza High School in Cape Town and was later promoted to the Head of Department (HOD) of Life Orientation during the period February 1994 till 31 June 1999.

She graduated from the University of the Western Cape with a BA Hons Degree in Psychology, and a Higher Diploma in Education. She further acquired a Diploma in Training and personnel Management from Damelin School of Management. In 1996, she registered with WIT's Business School a Management Advance Programme (MAP) with two outstanding modules to be completed: Principles Economics and Financial Accounting.

She is currently registered for a Masters in Management specialising in Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation.

I declare that this research study is conducted in the interest of fulfilling the requirements of my studies. I do not stand to benefit financially or otherwise except the above.

## **Appendix 1.3: Informed Consent form**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Part I: Information Sheet**

##### **Introduction**

I am Sibongile Nhlabathi, a Master in Management in the field of Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation student with WITS Graduate School of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand. I am conducting research on the implementation of skills development programs in the Education, Training and Development (ETD) sector. I am going to provide you with more information later when we meet and I invite you to be a part of this research study. Of course, you do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate.

##### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research study is to systematically assess the implementation of skills development programmes in the ETD sector utilizing the ETDPSETA as a case study. Literature refers to this exercise as implementation evaluation or process evaluation.

##### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because your extensive experience and knowledge of skills development, programme implementation and the ETD sector, which we believe can contribute enormously to our understanding and knowledge of these practices.

##### **Voluntary Participation**

Please note that your participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point in time during the research.

##### **Procedures**

If you accept, you will be asked to take part in a one on one interview and/or focus group discussion, which will be led by me – Ms Sibongile Nhlabathi. The entire discussion will be tape-recorded, and you will not be identified by name on the tape if you choose. The tape will be kept and stored in a safe place. The information recorded will also be kept confidential, and no one else except me will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after the research report has been produced. You do not have to share any information that you are not comfortable sharing.

### **Duration**

The research takes place over a period of three months in total.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about how to improve implementation of skills development in the sector particularly by the SETA.

### **Sharing the Results**

Each participant will receive a summary of the results. There will also be follow up small meetings as we deem necessary. Following those meetings, we will submit the results WITS and SETA management.

### **Who to Contact**

Faculty of Commerce, Law & Management: Ms Jennifer Mgolodela

Email: [jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za](mailto:jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za)

## **Part II: Certificate of Consent**

### **Statement by the participant**

I have been invited to participate in research about the implementation of skills development in the education training and development sector and I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and all questions I have been asked, have been answered to my satisfaction. I therefore consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant: .....

Signature of Participant: .....

Date: .....

### **Statement by the researcher**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands their rights. I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I further confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix 1.4: Transcribed Interview Schedule**

**Date: February 2016**

**Venue: HO – Bedford view**

**Respondent: One**

### **Question 1      Conceptualisation of programmes**

-                      Theory of change

I must indicate to you upfront that the Programme you have chosen is the most difficult in terms of conceptualization. One of the reasons is that this particular Programme is mainly targeting unemployed people. Whereas when we do the process of planning for the sector we consider mainly employed people because the process of planning starts with the research in terms of compiling the SSP. The SSP looks at various sub-sectors and looks mainly at the skills needs of employees in the sector especially focusing on the employers that are levy payers in the SETA. If you had chosen another programme that deals with employed people, the process of planning is much more simpler and straight forward. You had the SSP, which outlines the scarce & critical skills and outline the PIVOTAL critical top ten scarce skills in the sectors. We take that and it is then translated into various programmes of the APP to address the skills gaps. But when it comes to youth development, how it came about was that we had to look at mainly national priorities. In that regard, some national priorities are in our SSP some are not. The ones that we consider which are in our SSP for instance are the ones focusing on TVET Colleges, those are in the SSP and are also national priorities. So with the Youth Development, we simply had to concentrate on the data that we got from the national priority list. The main intention of this programme was to give young people skills through qualifications. Later on the SETA was expected to do the placement for employment. The initial plan was mainly to give young unemployed people skills. But later on because of the high unemployment rate we had to look at the placement rate.

So in terms of conceptualization we had to look at the Programmes that are addressing those national imperatives. That is skilling young unemployed people and placing them into employment. So that is why you will in that particular programme you will have sub-programmes like, Workplace Experience for TVET Colleges and UoTs, Learnerships, bursaries that we give to young people, you will also have Internships and later on we also added the Second-chance to give young people the second chance to pass Matric. So, that

is where the process of planning basically started in terms of planning and Youth Development is mainly based on the national priorities, which are in the SSP but the data is not there. For the data, you then have to go elsewhere to say for example, looking at the needs we then had to consider that there are about R3 million people who are unemployed who don't have skills and all that and then you use skills to contribute to all that.

So once we have identified the focus Areas, those will be translated into Programmes and that are outlined to you and then from there there's costing inputs into the targets. The APP mainly says here is the need, and the need is addressed through this Programme, and to achieve this Programme, here is the budget. You are correct to say it is the Programme wherein the SETA is investing a lot of money, because there is an issue of Stipend, and issue of placement in employment. So the stipend issue is very critical in this particular Programme. Also, there is an issue of bursaries to cater for students' accommodation and so on. So that is why you find that Programmes are expensive to implement, but I must say in terms of the ETD Sector, is not supposed to be the core, as the core is employees. But then we had the look at the National Priorities and direct our APP towards that. So that is how those end up in the APP. Now we are supposed to happen is that after the APP we then look into the Implementation Plan. And because the SETA uses the Project Management Approach, these programmes are turned into projects and are given to Provincial Offices to actually implement. So most of the Youth Development Programmes are in the Provinces for implementation. That is the entire process of planning.

When this Programme was initially put together, that deeper thinking, may that is where since I indicated to you at the beginning that you have chosen a very difficult one. It is the one programme wherein not much went into the thinking around what kinds of change do we want in order to assist the young people. In terms of the Conceptual Framework, and if you read some of the literature where we got some of the data, the idea was that; the impact of this programme must be on demonstrable skills on young people. And also increase the placement rate into employment. So those were the two pillars around the theoretical framework. Although we never got into the Theory of Change but the Conceptual Framework was based on the literature before us was that the youth have acquired skills that will make them employable.

- Core components of the programmes

There are two things here, there is what we consider as successful sub-programming within the programme which are also core but also there is especially taken from the conceptual framework of this particular programme looking at what we consider to be the most important sub-programme within the programme. On addressing the question on what we see as key projects from this particular programme is the issue of work-placed based programmes, i.e. the learnership, internship and work-place experience. These form the back rock for the programme as they have within them a component of theory and workplace. Some within those are more successful than the others but these key and we needed to do a thorough conceptual planning to ensure that they are successful. I think this is where the organization failed because we did not spend a lot of time looking at those programme in terms of ensuring that in terms of their content and structure so that they are able to meet the target audience but also achieve outcomes, e.g. there is lot that goes into learnerships, while it is regulated programme, we need to give a sectoral flavor & that flavor comes from having to ensure that when you put it together in term of 70% work place and 30% theory, you do it in such a manner that its linked to the agenda of the SETA. That starts with putting it together; register it and getting providers that are accredited. Ensure that in the monitoring of this programme the components are implemented properly but we simply did not do it. The 2<sup>nd</sup> example is internships; we have been talking about have a structure or modules to a structured programme. We don't have a theoretical structure that we give to employers to say that if you host our learners you have to comply with. We simply left to the providers and employers to decide. The workplace place linked to a qualification is the easier. Bursaries have also become one of success stories but also needs further thought through.

## **2. Planning for implementation**

Look over years we have fallen short in exactly that, planning for implementation. We have tried to document and we have tried to follow the process of planning, there has been challenges. Nonetheless, this is how it done. Once the programme is in the APP, the first process is allocation to the Provinces will be carried out based on the need of that province. One the criticism of the SSP is that it does not drill down to the needs in a particular Province. We rely on provinces to give their needs based on the PGDS but we still fall short and we end up allocating willy-nilly and do that most of the time. There

is no structure or processes to justify allocation to a province based on valid needs. Thereafter, the allocation is translated into an implementation strategy. We then sit and do a plan that address the following components (i) consultation with stakeholders, (ii) recruitment of learners, (iii) recruitment of service providers and in cases where there are no relevant service providers the you would focus to (iv) recruitment of employers who will recruit the learners. Then SETA after all that starts with the implementation. This model applies especially on the Learnership Programmes. However with Bursaries you need to get unemployed people through the employer, which is difficult, as they are not attached to the employer. Although some have volunteered to assist in recruiting unemployed people, so that's how we attain them with the hope and intention that the employers upon completion will absorb them. In most instances we have failed in that regard. Thus we have now taken a decision to channel funds to NSFAs.

### **3. Delivery/Implementation systems**

#### **- Implementation structures**

The Provincial Offices are the Delivery Channels but there are systems that were supposed to help in the delivery. The first system is the documentation that will be presented as evidence to show the programme has been delivered. The documentation has to be in place before the implementation happens. This is one component of the delivery system.

The second system is that, once the documentation is in place, for a structured programme is that there the youth have to be in class, i.e. for the bursary and the learnership/internship the learner must be with the employer and commenced the programme. There are mechanisms that will show that the programme has started, (i) being the documentation, (ii) the registers of the classes that the programme has started and (iii) there will be monitoring reports.

Then there will be various reports that should be submitted on intervals, e.g. monthly and quarterly reports to indicate how far the programme is in terms of its implementation and will be accompanied by various evidences. But there will also be reports from employers and service providers.

Coupled with that, for the Project Management is a software that was developed by the SETA, which is project management linked but was going to have all components such

as planning and project delivery would be tracked through an online system that could be indicate where the project is in terms of implementation. Although the SETA did not proceed with the system even though most staff members undertook training in this regard. Therefore, the organization depends of human capital in terms of delivery and tracking of projects. The reporting had to on a system MIS, we initially we started with data net. The idea of data net was that all these learners; once they start with programme they will be then captured on the system to track them. This was to help in tracking the learners. For a while data net was working until last year. We invested on e new system that is giving us problems.

- Key role players in the implementations

The intricacy of the chosen programme is that each of the sub-programmes has different stakeholders so it's not generic stakeholders. You have the learner who has to commit that they will be in the sub-programme; employer who commits to hosting the learner throughout the duration of the learnership, the service providers who is obliged to deliver a quality programme and SETA that not only provides the funding for the programme but ensures that the programme is correctly implemented in terms of quality assurance as well as monitoring.

The only sub-programme that doesn't follow this structure is the Second-chance Matric. This is programme has not fitted properly because it doesn't have the component of the employer. This is a skills programme within a sub-programme although the learner ends up with a full qualification.

The SETA has also adopted a partnership approach. In this case you will have a government institution, NYDA in terms of funding, monitoring and so on.

Implementation in line with the implementation plan

I would say yes and no. It is like starting a race; all of you have the same goal but taking different routes to the same destination. Not following the same to get the same outcome. The initial intend as well as the final outcome in terms of how what we want to achieve on the conceptualization framework and the final outcome. What matters is what happens in the middle that. People are given the same brief but follow different approaches to

achieve the set targets. But at the end similar goals have been achieved. By accident we get into the destination. We arrive at the destination at the last minutes. We have not interrogated the middle in term of delivery. There is confusion in the middle.

But there has not been interrogation of what happens in the middle line, as that is where the misinterpretation of the brief occurs resulting in people deciding on different paths. However, we have been able to achieve targets despite the weakness that is set right in the middle of implementation. For the years I have been I this organization, you will realize that we achieve the results at the minutes and one of the reasons we arrive at the destination late its because what happens during implementation is not properly managed & monitored to ensure that the scheduling is such that it is precise and in line with timeline. We galvanized at the last minute to achieve targets.

I have said this to the organization many times that as long as you don't have a very strong central project management hub in the office of COO, we always have confusion in the middle. We have accidentally experimented this by setting up a strong contract management hub and I can tell that unit has assisted the SETA in contract management. Although its not yet there because of lack of capacity & clarity of role but merely having that, it has assisted, We are must better with dealing with contracts. Although staff handling this process is well informed on the progress made on contracts, the problem arises in that the there is no feedback provided to the Project Managers is not done timeously. We do have an excellent contract management but not the project management hub that would be as strong as expected. This is where the confusion lies. As long as we have one person as COO looking at all of that, the nature of the programme alone is huge the budget of that is 292million and you expecting it to be run by one person coordination only 10 people, no ways. For me in the middle is that lack of project management hub.

#### - Standardization and Compliance

Standardization and compliance is there and not there at the same time. Standardisation is not there but there is compliance, and it is only picked up in the last minute that there is no compliance again because there is no one checking progress throughout the process. This is someone that would indicate when there is documentation outstanding and ensures that the implementation goes accordingly as planned. Also the unit would ensure that the standardization is happening in the same process through all the Provinces.

However, compliance is enforced because there are outside forces that force us ensure that this done. But without those there would be found wanting in that regard. The external forces referred to for instance, the Internal/External Auditors and DHE'T. Internally we also need to strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, which can play the role of alerting all those concerned if they are not following the same route or doing what is not expected in terms of managing the projects. But I don't think they should be involved in implementation.

- Recruitment in line with design

Recruitment as indicated above is happening in line with the programmes intent original design and theory in that we have improved over the years in that regard. Reason being that there is compliance and enforcement on the requirements of each programme. Once the requirements have been given to the employers to carry out recruitment, there is also checking mechanism such as appointing training providers who do the second check to ensure that beneficiaries are indeed meeting the requirements of the programmes that need to be implemented to ensure the material given to learners is of the required quality, for instance. That has assisted a lot to increase throughput rate such 90% of learners complete the programme. Having said that, I did not say 100% , there is still 10% learners who were allowed to skip the criteria because came through various mechanisms or lack of thorough checking e.g. internships require beneficiaries to have degree, but you find learners who come through the CEO' office have none and you find yourself doing damage control. Its not a lot, because of the auditors & other structures

#### **4. Context of implementation**

I will not speak with expert knowledge on this. This is an area I am not too knowledgeable about in terms of this programme, but because I'm involved with planning, when describing the context internally its very difficult. What I have observed is that, there isn't enough information & knowledge on youth development that's what led to a decision to say for instance lets have a research chair, to generate the knowledge to assist us to understand the context within which we must operate in terms implementation of the youth development programmes. My observation is that the SETA staff is not knowledgeable enough and as a result we operate within the ill-informed

context. And then we take these programmes to communities again not knowing although some employers guide us. It is my view that we need to partner with youth formations that deal with unemployed youths because they know and are in a position to advice on the approaches to be undertaken in involving the youths in the programmes. I think we done a hit and miss maybe relying on the employers and they don't always understand the needs of the youth within the communities.

As a result, there are factors that negatively affect programme knowledge, one in particular being that you sometimes find that there are not many employers during implementation who are not willing to host the youth. And that results in challenges as a target is set and needs to be achieved for placing so many learners, for example the SSP had outlined that focus for the placement of youth would only be given to those undertaking the courses in line with the education sector, but you hardly find any youths planning to enter the sector in TVET and UoTs and you end up expanding on your scope; which was not intentional. I have seen that in learnerships. The provincial coordinators end up placing learners wherever or anywhere. The biggest factor is the relationship with employers

## **5. Support systems**

- Training, technical assistance and general support

Our support structures are very weak. Under Support we have technical support, which is related to MIS and IT for supporting the implementation. Then there is any other general support – internally it would be training. In terms of training, this organization has done very well in ensuring that staff is trained in order to be able to deliver, for instance previously all staff members involved in implementation of projects were offered project management training. This talks to our mandate, which is concerned, about training and skills development, we have to be leaders in that role. I think in that area we are strong

However, technical support, MIS Systems is very weak for the past five years from inception its been bag in the past five years. It has become worse recently. With regard to general assistance and support, there is HR has played a very important role in terms of ensuring that there is capacity in terms of implementation of programmes such as youth development, which is very difficult and heavy. Supply Chain as a support system is very slow and the SETA lacks the understanding that even if when in finance you provide direct support to the implementation process in ensuring that payments are done



timeously. Implementation is usually remains with operations and they have to see to finish.

- Core components:

There needs to be strong HR, SCM, Monitoring and Research and Finance as well as Contract Management are all core components of support mechanism in terms of implementation. Then when it comes to Technical support, strong IT and software support is required to assist in the flow of implementation process. Having experts who understand the needs of the organisation also mainly influences technical Support.

In terms of training, I believe an individual has to approach HR if they find themselves lacking or in need of training so that they can best deliver. Training could be done internally by bringing all those concerned together to share some knowledge or by getting an external service provider to come and provide a particular training. The only lacking component in this regard is Continuous Professional Development for staff members. This could be achieved through having one-day Capacity Training sessions for staff that are involved in working on certain projects.

- Implementation reviews

There were two reflection studies that we did, in the five years, on evaluation for Youth Development programmes. In the review we focused mainly on Workplace experience, one was for Internships and the other was on Learnerships and Second –Chance Matric. The studies we carried out in two different financial years. The findings however, show that there is some kind of success, not too great or too bad for all these programmes. The evaluation study focused on two aspects, i.e. whether the learners found the actual programme useful, if it helped them in improving their lives and if they did complete the programme. The second focus point was whether upon undertaking the programme, the learner was able to find employment as a result in that regard. The study showed that when it comes to the completion and the nature of the programme results showed we were on track. In general the results showed that our programmes were well received and mostly completed by those who undertook the studies. But when it comes to placement it was about 36%, which tells you that our placement is weak. However internally we have never interrogated these reviews to change conceptualization and to change how these programmes need to be implemented these kinds of reviews have not been done internally

and the recommendations of the review have never been implemented. The five year implementation has however never been reviewed.

## **6. Critical success factors and challenges**

The critical success factors on the implementation were has managed over the years to meet the set targets that is one success factor. How we meet it is another issue. The second factor is whilst there isn't much in terms of the reports that we are getting; there has been completion of the programmes by most learners who enroll for them, and the third one is whilst our model may seem to be confused, we have been considered as one of the best practice SETAs in terms of the implementation of our programmes especially on learnerships and internships.

Placement is one, two is not sticking to conceptualization – our implementation is laizes faire, anyone does what they want & not sticking to the original conceptualization framework therefore making implementation process challenging in the sense that everyone does what they want to. The third challenge is that some of our programmes have now reached their sell-by dates they now need to be reviewed such as the ECD/AET and ComDev programmes which don't always yield the expected results. Although the ETQA unit is in the process of trying to re-phase these programmes but they have long expired. The sooner we stop implementing the better.